Parameter-Resetting in L2?*

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1 Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to present an account of the phenomenon of pro-drop in L2 based on a theory of L2 acquisition suggested by Tsimpli & Smith (1991). This theory assumes the availability of UG principles and the lack of parameter-resetting in case the target grammar adopts a different parametric value from L1.

We will first present some of the current approaches to L2 acquisition followed by the alternative theory of L2 we are adopting. We will introduce the syntactic properties associated with the pro-drop parameter and outline the results of the studies related to pro-drop in L2 learning. We will, briefly, discuss the method of the study and the subjects' exposure to the second language. We will then discuss our data and suggest a syntactic account for them in the framework outlined.

2 Theories of L2 acquisition

In the Principles and Parameters framework (Chomsky, 1986), the assumption with respect to the process of L1 acquisition is that given the Principles of UG and a set of unfixed parameters, the learner will set the appropriate value of the parameter with a certain amount of triggering data. When it comes to L2 acquisition, however, there are certain differences from first language acquisition that have been assumed to play a role in the process of second language learning. In particular, the fact that parameters have already been set once to the value of the L1 grammar and that the mature state of the L2 grammar is rarely equivalent to the mature state of a first language are issues on which almost everyone agrees. However, there have been different approaches to the question of how different L2 from L1 acquisition is, and what factors are responsible for the attested differences.

According to Clahsen (1988) and Clahsen and Muysken (1986), L2 learning is qualitatively different from L1. While in L1 UG is operative, in L2

the learning process involves the use of exclusively inductive learning strategies. On the assumption that the learning mechanisms involved in L1 are different from the ones involved in L2 acquisition, the implication is that there is no parameter-resetting in L2 given that parameters constitute part of the language module. The L2 data they base their account on concentrate on word-order in German as a second language. Data from Japanese learners of English involving Subjacency violations (Bley-Vroman et al., 1988) have also been used to provide supporting evidence for a theory formulated along these lines.

Notice that one implication that arises from the claim that inductive learning strategies exclusively regulate the process of second language acquisition is that L2 grammars can, in principle, constitute "impossible" languages, not constrained by UG[1]. It has been shown (White, 1990 and Finer, 1990), however, that the options adopted in the construction of L2 grammars are, in fact, made available by UG. These options may sometimes be distinct from the ones adopted by both the L1 grammar and the target L2 grammar. We will provide further evidence (see section 5.2) for the claim that UG principles regulate any language acquisition process with respect to the options associated with pro-drop phenomena.

A different account of L2 acquisition has been put forward by White (1985, 1990) who assumes both that UG is available and that parameter-resetting eventually takes place in L2. With respect to the differences in the process of L1 and L2 acquisition, however, she attributes them, partly, to the fact that the parameters, already set by L1, lead to what are known as transfer errors. L1 values affect L2 learning which is particularly evident when the parametric value of L2 is other than the one adopted by the L1 grammar. The crucial assumption, however, is that UG and parameters are at work in the process of second language acquisition.

With respect to the second approach, namely the one that assumes parameters to be reset in L2, there have been various attempts to account for the attested relative slowness in L2 learning (when compared to L1) as well as for the different stages attested in the acquisition of a language when this is learned as L1 or L2. So, for example, the notion of "markedness" has been assumed to determine the "default" or "initial" setting adopted in early child speech (cf. Hyams, 1986) with respect to the positive value of the pro-drop

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[1]Clahsen & Muysken (1989) argue that the differences between first and second language acquisition can be attributed to the presence vs absence of parameters in the two learning processes. In particular, it is assumed that principles of UG which are not subject to parameterization are available both in L1 and L2 learning while UG information which is parameterized is not available to the second language learner. They, thus, conclude that adult L2 learning involves neither parameter-setting nor parameter-resetting. The crucial point we need to mention here is that Clahsen & Muysken (op. cit.) assume (some) UG principles to be parameterized, while in our theory we assume that UG principles are not associated with parameters (cf.section 3).

parameter. White (op. cit.) and Liceras (1989) also argue for the "unmarked" status of the [+null subject] value with respect to second language data. In particular, the claim goes as follows: if a speaker of a pro-drop language learns a non-pro-drop L2 then the parameter has to be reset from the "unmarked" to the "marked" value. In the reverse situation, namely when a speaker of a non-pro-drop language learns a pro-drop L2, the parameter in question is re-set from the "marked" to the "unmarked" value. The implication with respect to the different status of the parametric values is that in the former case the resetting is relatively slower than in the latter case.

Notice, however, that the notion of "markedness" apparently constitutes an ad-hoc assumption given that the criteria determining the "marked" or "unmarked" status of a parametric value are not clearly defined. With respect to the pro-drop parameter in particular, there is no a priori reason to classify the positive value as the "default" one given that both parametric options have been accounted for in terms of different abstract properties of the AGR head in a given language (cf.Rizzi, 1986b). Moreover, the assumption that the [+pro-drop] value is the "unmarked" one seems to contradict the predictions made by the "Subset Principle" (cf. Wexler & Manzini, 1987) as has convincingly been argued by Smith (1988).

3 Another L2 theory

Following recent developments in the theory (Borer, 1983, Chomsky, 1988, Ouhalla, forthcoming) we will assume that parameters are not associated with UG principles but with lexical items and in particular, functional categories. Parametric variation is exclusively determined by the different values associated with functional categories. We adopt the idea that functional categories form an independent component of UG (Tsimpli & Ouhalla, 1990), the UG lexicon. With respect to L1 acquisition (Tsimpli, in prep.), it is this module of UG that is subject to maturation. In other words, the notion of Critical Period in language acquisition can be viewed as being associated with the maturational process affecting just the Functional Module. With respect to L2 acquisition (Tsimpli & Smith, 1991), on the other hand, the prediction is that this module is inaccessible to the adult L2 learner, on the assumption that language learning at stages other than those included in the Critical Period cannot make use of the same mechanisms. Thus, parameter-resetting in L2 is excluded.

UG principles, however, are assumed to be operative in any language acquisition process. The implication that arises regarding this assumption is that any language, be it L1, L2, Ln, is a possible language as defined by UG. Moreover, the availability of UG principles allows the L2 learner to make use of grammatical options which, however, are not the ones adopted by the L1 grammar nor by the L2 target grammar. A UG option will be argued to be

instantiated in the process of second language learning with respect to the pro-drop data in this study.

One of the predictions made by this theory is that where L2 differs from L1 in terms of parametric values there will be transfer errors at least at the early stages of L2 learning. Given that the Functional module is not accessible to the language learner, the parametric values of L1 are imposed on L2 giving rise to these transfer errors. At the more advanced stages of L2 learning, where the L2 learner seems to adopt the correct parametric choice we will assume that this is the result of general learning mechanisms[2] correctly analyzing the input data.

In terms of the premises on which this theory of L2 learning is based, the observed differences in the developmental sequence of L1 and L2 learning can be accounted for. In particular, the fact that, for example, there is a correlation between acquisition of inflection and Verb-second in German L1 which seems to be lacking in German L2 (Clahsen, 1988) can be viewed as resulting from the absence of the parametric values associated with the functional categories Inflection and Comp[3]. Moreover, this theory can account for the well-known differences between L1 and L2 in their mature state. L2 learning, being a non-deterministic process, results in individually different levels of proficiency while L1 acquisition is assumed to reach a mature state shared by all native speakers of the language.

Having outlined the theory of L2 we are adopting, we now turn to the issue of pro-drop in L2.

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[2]For the purposes of this paper we will not invoke the operation of general learning mechanisms, since we are dealing with the early stages of L2 acquisition. We are aware of the fact that the term "general learning mechanisms" is too vague. However, we believe that evidence for the exact nature of the learning strategies involved should come from more advanced learners, where the L2 grammar seems to have acquired a status similar to that of the target grammar.

[3]The assumption regarding V-movement to Comp (in matrix clauses) in V2 languages, like Dutch and German, is that the Comp position is specified for the [+finite] feature, hence attracting a finite verb. It is this property associated with the functional category C that is assumed to be parameterized. On the other hand, the [±finite] distinction is a feature specification on the functional category I. With respect to first language acquisition by German children, Clahsen (op.cit.) argues that there is a correlation between the acquisition of verb-placement and finiteness. This correlation is shown to be missing in German L2 data given that inflectional endings are present from the early stages while corresponding differences in verb-placement are unattested in the respective stages.

4 Pro-drop In L2 literature

The standard assumption about the availability of null subjects in a given language is that it is the result of parameterisation. The parameter involved is known as the pro-drop parameter which is assumed to consist of three properties associated with the two values (positive and negative):

(1) (a)   null subjects
     (b)   apparent violations of that-t effects
     (c)   postverbal subjects

Greek being a pro-drop language, allows null subjects as in (2a), and postverbal subjects as in (4a), as opposed to English (a non-pro-drop language) where the relative constructions (2b and 4b) are ungrammatical. In addition, extraction out of an embedded clause introduced by an overt complementizer is grammatical in Greek while ungrammatical in English (see examples (3a & b)).

(2) (a)   Efige.
                left-3sg
                " He/she left".

     (b)   *   Left.

(3) (a)   Pjos ipes oti efige?
                who-nom said-2sg that left-3sg
                "Who did you say left?"
     (b)   *   Who did you say that left?
(4) (a)   Efige o Petros.
                left-3sg the-nom Petro
                "Petros left".
     (b)   *   Left Peter.

As has been pointed out by Chao (1981) with respect to Brazilian Portuguese, the correlation of the three properties with a single parameter is not cross-linguistically universal. However, given that the crucial question is whether there is parameter-resetting in L2 or not, the question as to whether there is a single parameter involved as argued by Rizzi (1982) or more than one, is not directly relevant to any L2 theory.

It could be the case that subject-inversion constitutes an independent parameter, in which case, additional or independent evidence would be needed for the latter to adopt the correct value, possibly as a result of re-setting. An additional parameter associated with the *that*-t effects could be assumed to be reset along the same lines. Notice, however, that the question of parameter-

resetting applies equally to all of the supposedly independent parameters. It could be argued, within the parameter-resetting approach, that the relative slowness in resetting the *that*-t parameter, for example, is due to the absence of the relevant triggering data which are inaccessible to the language learner at the early stages of L2 (cf. Liceras, 1989). The problem with this assumption, however, is that unless we define the nature of these data and also account for their unavailability at the stages in question the issue of parameter-resetting remains open. Moreover, if it is the case that we are dealing with more than one parameter then similar effects in first language acquisitional data should be attested, contrary to fact.

With respect to pro-drop in L2 there are two possibilities (ignoring the situation where L1 and L2 adopt the same parametric value): a speaker of a non-pro-drop L1 learning a pro-drop L2 (for example, an English speaker learning Spanish), and a speaker of a pro-drop L1 learning a non-pro-drop L2 (a Spanish speaker learning English).

Liceras (1989) discusses L2 data from English speakers learning Spanish. Her results show that the null subject property is available from the early stages of L2 learning while constructions which involve violations of the *that*-t filter and postverbal subjects are not equally accepted. *That*-t constructions are, in the majority of cases, corrected while corrections to postverbal subjects are not consistent. Similar results have been obtained from the case-study of a *savant* linguist in Smith & Tsimpli (1991) and Tsimpli & Smith (1991) on a variety of pro-drop languages like Greek, Spanish and Italian.

White (1985) discusses L2 data from Spanish speakers learning English (the second possibility). Her results show that the null subject property is incorrectly transferred from L1 to English in roughly 40% of the cases. Moreover, *that*-t constructions in English are considered grammatical and postverbal subjects are also accepted in a restricted number of cases.

5 The study

In our study we too concentrate on the second possibility, namely a speaker of a pro-drop L1 learning a non-pro-drop L2. Our subjects are 13 adult speakers of Greek learning English as a second language. Six of them have already had one year of intensive training in English (Intermediate level) and seven subjects have already completed two years of intensive training (Post-intermediate level). The test consisted of two parts: the first part consisted of 30 English sentences (see Appendix) in which the subjects were asked to give grammaticality judgements and make corrections if these were necessary and possible. The second part consisted of 10 Greek sentences to be translated into English. All Greek sentences were grammatical and included constructions with null subjects, *that*-t, postverbal subjects, dislocated subjects and dislocated

objects. The same constructions were involved in the English sentences some of which were ungrammatical.

5.1 The results

The overall results with respect to the three properties associated with the pro-drop parameter are quite different from the results obtained and discussed by White (1985). In particular, the differences involve the (un-)acceptability to Greek learners of both null and postverbal subjects in English.

As far as English sentences involving referential null subjects are concerned both groups (Intermediate and Post-intermediate) considered them ungrammatical. Representative examples are given in (5) and (6):

(5)   *   Are very angry with Susan.
(6)   *   Lives with his mother.

The corrected version of these sentences included a pronoun in the subject position as illustrated in (7 & 8):

(7)   We/ You are very angry with Susan.
(8)   He lives with his mother.

Null subject sentences with weather-verbs were also considered ungrammatical and the corrected version was as in (10):

(9)   *   Is raining in London.
(10)   It is raining in London.

In this case the quasi-argument *it* was included in the corrected version. Notice that, in this respect, quasi-arguments pattern together with arguments as far as the null subject property is concerned. Similarly, the Greek sentences which involved null subjects were translated correctly into English with a pronoun in the subject position. An example with a referential subject is provided in (11). (12) involves a weather-verb:

(11)   Grafume ena gramma.
          write-1pl a letter
          "We are writing a letter. / We write a letter".
(12)   Vrekhi.
          rain-3sg
          "It is raining. / It rains".

The level of acceptability of expletive null subjects, however, turns out to be considerably different. Sentence (13) is an example:

(13)   *   Seems that Mary is happy.

Almost 80% of the subjects failed to correct the sentence. A few preposed the embedded subject and left the embedded subject position empty as shown in (14):

(14)   *   Mary seems that is happy.

Overall, as far as the null subject property is concerned, Greek speakers seem to find null subjects ungrammatical in English with the exception of expletive null subjects which, in the vast majority of cases, were accepted.

The results obtained from English sentences involving *that*-t effects are also quite consistent. Over 95% considered these sentences grammatical, contrary to fact. The examples are given in (15) and (16):

(15)   *   Who do you think that left?
(16)   *   Who did they say that bought the apples?

When translating similar sentences into English, the translation never involved deletion of the complementizer, hence the translated version was also ungrammatical:

(17)   (a)   Pjos ipes oti pandreftike ti Maria?
                Who-nom said-2sg that married-3sg the-acc Maria
                "Who did you say married Maria?"
       (b)   *   Who did you say that married Maria?

It should be mentioned at this point that the subjects are aware of the possibility of Complementizer deletion in English. This is evident from the judged level of acceptability (95%) of English sentences without a Complementizer as in (18) and (19):

(18)   Who do you think ate the strawberries?
(19)   What do you think Peter bought?

Notice, also, that Complementizers are not allowed to delete in Greek. Given that the subjects are aware of the optionality of overt complementizers in English, the acceptability of constructions involving *that*-t effects cannot be attributed to the difference in the two languages regarding this property.

The results obtained with respect to postverbal subjects are also consistent. English sentences involving postverbal subjects as in (20a & 20b) were also corrected by preposing the subject to sentence-initial position, as in (20b) and (21b):

(20)   (a)   *   Is going to the cinema John.
       (b)   John is going to the cinema.
(21)   (a)   *   Is coming the postman.
       (b)   The postman is coming.

Greek sentences with postverbal subjects were translated into English with the subject always in sentence-initial position:

(22)   Troi stafilia o Yanis.
                  eat-3sg grapes the-nom Yanis
                  "Yanis is eating/ eats grapes".

To summarise the results discussed so far, it seems that with respect to the three properties putatively associated with the pro-drop parameter, *that*-t effects clearly involve transfer errors while postverbal subjects are not available in English L2. The null subject option, on the other hand, is available (incorrectly) only in the case of expletive subjects.

Before we present a syntactic account of these data notice that our results when compared with White's study are not similar in all the relevant respects. The Spanish subjects in White's study accepted some English null subject sentences while postverbal subjects were also accepted in restricted environments. *That*-t constructions, however, were accepted in the same consistent way that our study shows.

5.2 Analysis of the data

On the basis of the data discussed so far the question as to whether parameter-resetting is involved in L2 cannot receive a straightforward answer. Among the properties associated with the pro-drop parameter, it is only the non-availability of postverbal subjects in English L2 that is systematically correctly applied and does not seem to involve transfer errors.

Constructions with null subjects, on the other hand, are corrected in the majority of the cases by the insertion of a subject pronoun. Notice, however, that it is consistently the case with constructions involving null expletive subjects that the latter are not corrected by inserting an overt expletive. The question that arises for a parameter-resetting account then, is the following: "Are the inserted pronominal subjects required by the already reset parameter?

and if so why doesn't the -null subject option correctly extend to expletives?". Recall that sentence (13) was, sometimes, changed by preposing the embedded subject to sentence-initial position and leaving the embedded clause subjectless (see (14)). The assumption that the preposing of the subject is an instance of NP-movement (Raising) is excluded given that Raising in MG occurs if at all, only with *na*-clauses, i.e tenseless clauses. Notice, in this respect, that there is independent evidence from the data obtained that the subjects distinguish between *oti-* (+finite) and *na-* (-finite) clauses in MG by translating them into the equivalent *that-* and infinitival clauses in English. Thus, the possibility of a transfer error with respect to NP-movement is minimal. On the other hand, a sentence like "Mary seems that is happy" is perfectly acceptable in Greek with the subject being a topic (or dislocated element) co-indexed with a pro in the embedded subject position. This structure assumes "Mary" to be in an A'-non-Operator position while the canonical subject of the embedded clause is a pro, coreferential with "Mary". It is the latter possibility, available in Greek but not in English, that the subjects probably had in mind when changing the given sentence. Notice, however, that the changed version, namely (14), involves a null subject in the embedded clause as well as an expletive null subject in the matrix clause. Thus, the sentence remains problematic for the parameter-resetting approach.

Our account of the discrepancy between the acceptability of a null expletive subject as opposed to the referential one is based on Rizzi's (1986b) analysis of pro. Rizzi (op. cit.) argues that there are two conditions which regulate the distribution of a pro, licensing and identification. Licensing involves the presence of an appropriate licensing-Head which governs the subject position via Spec-Head agreement. Whether AGR is a licensing-Head or not is a parametrized property. In pro-drop languages AGR can license a pro in the Spec of AGRP position while in non-pro-drop languages AGR is not a licensing Head. The identification requirement refers to the recoverability of the content of the null subject. This is fulfilled by the agreement features (phi-features) shared by the AGR head and the subject in the Specifier position of the AGR projection. Notice that identification is a condition on pro required by UG: a pro subject needs to be identified. However, the identification requirement does not need to be fulfilled in the case of null expletive subjects. The assumption is that the latter, being non-referential, are not subject to the identification requirement. A pro expletive is licensed in a language where AGR is a licenser but does not require identification due to its non-referential status. Alternatively it could be assumed, along with Guerssel (1988) and Ouhalla (1991) that the default AGR element (usually third person singular) is not specified for AGR (phi-) features, hence identification of the pro subject is not possible.
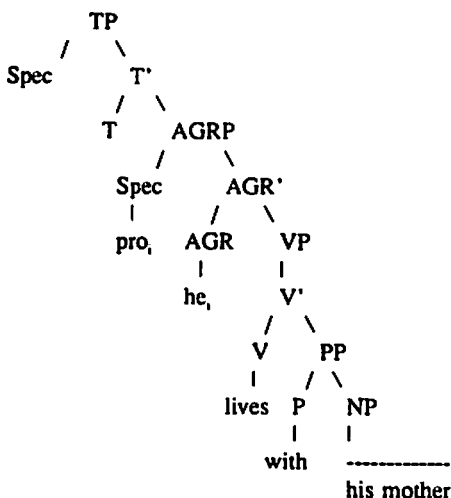
Turning back to the L2 data under discussion, we would like to argue that the insertion of pronominal subjects is not really the result of the pro-drop

parameter being reset to the negative value. Recall that the theory of L2 we are adopting excludes the possibility of parameter-resetting, due to the inaccessibility of the functional component which is responsible for parametric variation. What is still accessible, however, is the component of the grammar which includes the Principles of UG. In other words, there are two options in the construction of an L2 grammar: the first one involves transferring the L1 parametric value to the L2 data, giving rise to transfer errors. The second option is to exploit a possibility available directly by UG which, however, does not give rise to the actual grammatical option that the target grammar adopts.

As far as referential subjects in our data are concerned, we would like to suggest that the property associated with the AGR category in Greek, a pro-drop language, namely that it can license a pro subject, is adopted in the English grammar at the early stages of L2 acquisition. On the assumption that English is pro-drop at the stage under discussion it follows that a pro subject can be licensed in the Spec position of AGRP. On the other hand, for the identification condition to be fulfilled the presence of overt agreement features are required. We suggest that subject pronouns are re-analyzed as Agreement elements occupying the head position of AGRP thus leading to the identification of the null subject. A similar account has also been suggested by Rizzi (1986a) for Northern Italian dialects and by Roberge (1986) for Colloquial and Canadian French where subject clitics are argued to be reanalysed as agreement elements[4]. The relevant structure as far as the relevant L2 data are concerned, is as in (23):

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[4] It has been pointed out to us (Manzini, p.c.) that the possibility of reanalysis of that sort could be a parameterized property in which case the claim that parameters are not accessible in L2 learning is problematic. We would like to claim, however, that given that the language in this case is pro-drop, AGR licenses pro which consequently has to be identified (this is a UG requirement on pro). The L2 learner therefore, resorts to the strategy of reanalysis in order to fulfil the UG requirement of identification on pro.

(23)
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                    TP
                 /     \
            Spec        T'
                      /    \
                    T      AGRP
                        /       \
                     Spec        AGR'
                      |        /      \
                    pro,     AGR      VP
                              |        |
                             he,       V'
                                     /    \
                                    V      PP
                                    |    /   \
                                  lives  P    NP
                                         |    |
                                       with  ------------
                                            his mother
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On the assumption that subject pronouns are treated as Agreement elements, sentences like (13) with expletive pro can receive a straightforward explanation. Given that the L2 learners at this stage assume English to be pro-drop, as a result of transferring the Greek value, AGR is a licensing head. Recall that in the case of null expletives however, identification of pro is not required hence the absence of overt agreement features in the relevant construction.

The analysis presented so far apparently raises an immediate problem with respect to White's data as well as data that we have obtained from the spontaneous speech of Greek learners of English examples of which are given in (24):

(24) (a)   Is dancing. (=He is dancing.)
      (b)   Thursday come to school. (On Thursdays, I come to school.)
      (c)   Is raining. (=It is raining.)

It is a well-known fact that null subject sentences (without subject pronouns) are considered grammatical by L2 learners of English. In the absence of subject pronouns being re-analyzed as Agreement the obvious question is "what is the status of the null subject in these constructions?". Recall that, in terms of the L2 theory adopted here, there are two possibilities in L2 learning. One is to impose the L1 parametric value (transfer error) and the other is to make use of options allowed directly by UG. Our account of subjectless constructions like

the ones in (25) (taken from White's study) (see also (24)) stems from the option made available by UG principles:

(25)   John is greedy. Eats like a pig.

We would like to argue that the null subject in sentences like (24) and (25) is a PRO. Notice crucially, that in the absence of Agreement features, the AGR category does not project, hence the PRO subject occupies the Spec of TP position. This is an ungoverned position given that T does not belong to the class of licensing heads, thus it cannot govern the Specifier position in terms of the Spec-Head condition. The relevant construction is given in (26):

(26)   TP
        /   \
      Spec   T'
       | / \
      PRO T   VP
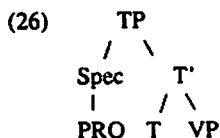
In the absence of Agreement, PRO lacks a governing category, thus it can refer to an antecedent in the (discourse) context, along the lines suggested by Tsimpli (1991) with respect to PRO subjects in early child speech.

What is clear with respect to the two alternatives provided by the theory of L2 we are adopting, is that either option is possible, at least at the early stages of L2 learning. Given that the learner has not as yet analyzed the morphological realisation of AGR in the target grammar, she can resort either to the choice of L1 (transfer error) or to a choice provided by UG. Notice that the crucial point with respect to the two alternatives is that they are available at the same stage of learning. This is precisely the prediction which the theory adopted here makes: in the absence of a deterministic process of language acquisition, the choices of constructing an L2 grammar can be more than one at a given stage in the learning process.

Going back to the sentence in (14), it is clear that the embedded verb does not have overt agreement features, given the absence of the pronoun. In terms of the analysis of null subjects presented, one can assume an alternative account, namely that the subject in the embedded clause is a PRO, on the basis that AGR is absent. The PRO subject is co-indexed with the dislocated NP, hence the coreferentiality. However, PRO would be governed by the Complementizer, hence this possibility is also excluded. The alternative solution is to assume that there is a variable trace in the embedded subject position co-indexed with the dislocated NP in the A'-non-Operator position. The matrix subject is assumed to be an expletive pro along the lines suggested above.

There is independent evidence from sentences in our study that supports the claim regarding the absence of parameter-resetting in L2. The relevant data involve dislocated subjects in English and Greek. Notice that dislocation in both languages is a grammatical option. It is only with respect to the sentences that involve dislocated subjects that there seems to be a discrepancy in the judgement of Intermediate and Post-intermediate subjects. Sentences like the one in (27) were accepted as grammatical by the Intermediate level subjects in 90% of cases while the same sentences were always considered ungrammatical by the more advanced subjects:

(27)   John, he broke the plates.

Sentences involving dislocated objects as in (28) were also provided as control in order for us to exclude the possibility that the acceptability judgements had to do with dislocation constructions as such:

(28)   I ate them yesterday, the apples.

Sentences like (28) were considered ungrammatical by both levels in 100% of cases. Object-dislocation is possible in both English and Greek, though in Greek it involves a clitic rather than a full pronoun in the object position. The fact that dislocated objects were not accepted leaves us with the existence of dislocated subjects as a question requiring an independent explanation.

Sentences with dislocated subjects have also been attested in the spontaneous speech of Greek learners of English. The relevant examples are given in (29):

(29)   (a)   My daughter she got to go to the theatre.
        (b)   This man he's on the phone.
        (c)   John he's coming.

On the assumption that English L2 is pro-drop at the stage under discussion, it is clear that sentences like (27) and (29) involve a transfer error. The sentence involves a pro subject licensed by the subject agreement while the NP subject occupies a topic position. The obvious question that arises, however, is why the more advanced subjects (Post-Intermediate level) considered this construction ungrammatical. Could it be the case that they have reset the parameter in question? Notice that, in the corrected version, some of the subjects deleted the pronoun and some the NP subject. It seems that, at this stage, the L2 learners have realised the correct representation for canonical subjects, while at the same time realising that English does not exhibit morphological agreement marking. Notice, however, that these L2 learners leave the "..seems" clauses subjectless. This discrepancy could receive a

plausible explanation in terms of a theory which excludes parameter-resetting in the following way: if the process of L2 learning was similar to L1 acquisition, then the recognition by the L2 learners that the English grammar does not involve rich agreement should lead to the pro-drop parameter being reset to the negative value. This assumption is based on the standard idea in L1 acquisition that acquisition of inflection has direct consequences for the nature of the abstract properties of functional categories and in this case Agreement. The evidence however, clearly shows that this cannot be the case. Learning the morphological realisation of Agreement in L2 does not result in changing the parametric value; if this was the case, then we should expect phonetically realised subjects to be obligatory in all environments.

On the assumption that more advanced L2 learners indeed have mastered the absence of agreement in English and consequently, have reanalysed agreement elements as subject pronouns we would expect that this change should be evident in their translation from Greek into English. The prediction is confirmed from Greek sentences involving a dislocated subject and a pronoun in subject position. Notice that overt pronouns in Greek (as in other null-subject languages) are emphatic.

(30)   I Maria, afti katharizi to spiti.
        the-nom Maria SHE cleans the house
        "Maria cleans the house herself".

Sentence (30) was translated by all advanced learners with the English anaphor "herself" rather than the equivalent pronoun. Learners at the lower level, however, either ignored the presence of the pronoun in the sentence or inserted the English pronoun "her" instead. We take this difference in the two levels to mean that the status of English pronouns is not the same at the two stages of learning.

Let us now consider the results obtained from *that*-t constructions. Recall, that an account for the acceptability of such sentences as (15) and (16) cannot involve the optionality of complementizers in English as opposed to Greek. Given that the possibility of extracting a wh-subject out of an embedded clause is fully acceptable in Greek as in (17), it is plausible to assume that these constructions are instances of transfer errors. The ungrammaticality of *that*-t constructions is standardly assumed to involve a violation of the ECP, a UG principle. The question that arises therefore, with respect to the theoretical claim that UG principles are available, is why L2 learners consider *that*-tin English grammatical. Our explanation has to do with the abstract properties associated with the Greek complementizer as opposed to the English one. It has been assumed in the literature (Du Plessis et al., 1987) that whether Comp is a proper governor or not in a language involves a parameter which is referred to as the Proper Government Parameter. If Comp is a proper governor then the

Spec of IP position in an embedded clause is allowed to remain phonetically empty. What we would like to suggest, with respect to the *that*-t data, is that Comp in Greek is a proper governor while in English it is not (cf. Rizzi, 1990). Thus, the acceptability of *that*-t constructions by the Greek L2 learners involves a transfer error attributed to the absence of parameter-resetting. The relevant parameter, in this case, is the Proper Government parameter.

In fact, this explanation is supported by independent evidence provided by White (1985). In her study, White uses French speakers learning English as control for her tests on the pro-drop parameter. French is a non-pro-drop language. The level of acceptability of *that*-t constructions to the French speakers is identical to the Spanish speakers. In other words, *that*-t constructions in English were considered grammatical by both French and Spanish L2 learners. The crucial point here is that similar constructions in French involve the *que-qui* rule and they are fully acceptable, as shown in the following example:

(31)   Qui crois-tu qui va venir?
        who believe-you that will come
        "Who do you believe will come?"

According to Rizzi (1990) the *que-qui* rule is an instance of overt agreement features in Comp, thus rendering Comp a proper governor. Agreement-in-Comp is licensed in the presence of a variable trace in the Spec position of CP which is co-indexed with the head C via Spec-Head agreement. The Agr-in-Comp strategy, Rizzi (op.cit.) argues, is one of the strategies languages use to extract a subject out of an embedded clause without giving rise to an ECP violation. The trace in the embedded subject position is therefore properly governed.

The English L2 data under discussion can easily be accounted for if we assume that there is a transfer error involved in the judgements of *that*-t constructions by the French learners. The parameter in question is again the Proper Government Parameter. Given that in similar constructions in French, Comp is a proper governor the L2 learners incorrectly transfer this value to the English Comp, hence the acceptability of *that*-t in English.

6 Conclusion

In this paper, we have tried to argue against a parameter-resetting approach to second language acquisition on the basis of data concentrating on the issue of the pro-drop parameter in L2. We have suggested an account for L2 learning which is based on the assumption that UG principles regulate the construction

of L2 grammars while, on the other hand, parameters are not available in any process of language acquisition other than L1 acquisition.

The data discussed are drawn both from White's (1985) study as well as the study we have conducted. With respect to these data we have shown that both the null subject option and *that*-t effects are incorrectly analyzed in the L2 grammar of a pro-drop speaker. On the basis of the theory suggested, we have argued that the L2 learner can resort to two options: one involves a transfer error and the other makes use of a grammatical option directly available by UG. In particular, we have assumed that the null subject property of the L1 grammar is imposed on the L2 data thus leading to a reanalysis of subject pronouns as agreement elements. *That*-t constructions, on the other hand, also involve transferring the abstract property associated with Comp which is also parameterized. We have also argued that the UG option is instantiated in the case of subjectless constructions in English L2 where the null subject is argued to be PRO.

Appendix

PART A:

1. Is going to the cinema John.
2. Who do you think that left?
3. Eats Mary yoghurt?
4. Has children.
5. John, he broke the plates.
6. What you buying in the market?
7. It is snowing.
8. Who do you believe is nice?
9. Seems that Mary is happy.
10. Andros, I saw him in the cinema.
11. Who did they say that bought the apples?
12. Are very angry with Susan.
13. I want Mary to buy flowers.
14. Who do you think ate the strawberries?
15. Are drinking orange-juice.
16. Mary loves children.
17. Who did you say that John married?
18. Is living in a flat.
19. Andros eats often fish and chips.
20. They are playing, the children.
21. Is raining in London.
22. John lives in Pireus.
23. What do they think Peter bought?
24. Is coming the postman.
25. Mary likes bananas very much.
26. She is visiting her doctor.
27. Lives with his mother.
28. I want him to do his homework.
29. Is dancing John.
30. I ate them yesterday, the apples.

PART B:

1. Vrekhi.
   rain-3sg
   "It is raining/ it rains".
2. Thelo na pai i kori mu sto skholio.
   want-1sg to go-3sg the-nom daughter my-gen to the-acc school
   "I want my daughter to go to school".
3. Pini nero.
   drink-3sg water-acc
   "S/he is drinking / drinks water".
4. Pjos ipes oti pandreftike ti Maria?
   who-nom said-2sg that married-3sg the-acc Maria
   "Who did you say married Maria?"
5. Aftos dhiavazi efimeridha.
   he-nom read-3sg newspaper-acc
   "He is reading / reads newspaper".
6. To faghame to psomi.
   it-acc ate-1pl the-acc bread
   "We ate the bread".
7. Troi stafilia o Yanis.
   eat-3sg grapes-acc the-nom Yanis
   "Yanis is eating / eats grapes".
8. I Maria afti katharizi to spiti.
   the-nom Maria SHE clean-3sg the-acc house
   "Maria is cleaning / cleans the house herself".
9. Ti dhiavazune?
   what-acc read-3pl
   "What are they reading?"
10. Grafume ena grama.
    write-1pl a-acc letter
    "We are writing / write a letter".

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