



Null -Subject Parameters in Pro-drop Languages A Microlinguistic Comparative Analysis between Standard English & Standard Arabic

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Abstract

Subject omission, null subject, as a pro-dropping phenomenon in pro-drop languages is a linguistic process whereby the syntactic subject of a structure is left implicit to be implicated contextually. This paper enacts a comprehensive comparative analysis of the null structures in two typo-logically distinct languages, namely, English, as a non-pro-drop language, and Arabic, being a canonical pro-drop language. The morphological, syntactic, pragmatic, psycholinguistic, diachronic, and corpus-based dimensions governing subject omission, besides some patterns of 2nd language acquisition and translation are investigated throughout.

To prob the phenomena in full, a mode of multidisciplinary approach based on some theoretical linguistic frameworks, and corpus - data analysis from a spectrum of dialects and registers was called. Specific psycholinguistic experiments- child language acquisition and pronoun resolution studies were also consulted. The overall conclusions confirm that the Arabic language is rich in its verbal inflectional morphology and syntactic structures which systematically enable pro subject dropping known as subject omission, whereas English restricts the phenomenon to pragmatically communicative contexts- imperatives and informal speech. Psycholinguistic assumptions initiate differential cognitive processing facades in interpreting silent subjects' structures across the languages concerned. Diachronically, some meticulous historical data indicate developed evidence that have shaped the process of pro-dropping capabilities.

By discussing theoretical implications for parameter-setting models in TGG, implicating practicum for bilingual language acquisition, and language teaching, this study highlights the importance of integrating the five levels of linguistic analysis, viz. semantic, discoursal, morphological, syntactic, and pragmatic to comprehend the phenomena of subject omission and binary classifications of pro-dropping processes in the subjected languages.

Keywords

subject omission, pro-drop, linguistic levels of analysis, psycholinguistics, diachronic linguistics, corpus-data analysis, language acquisition.



معايير الفاعل الصفري في اللغات التي تسمح بحذف الفاعل

دراسة مقارنة ميكرولغوية بين الإنجليزية المعيارية والعربية المعيارية

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المستخلص

تشير مَعَلْمَةُ الفاعل الصفري في الدراسات اللسانية إلى ظاهرة لغوية يُحذف فيها الفاعل النحوي من البنية التركيبية ليستدل عليه من السياق التداولي. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى إجراء تحليل لغوي -لساني مقارنة للبنى الصفري في لغتين مختلفتين نمطياً: الإنجليزية بوصفها لغة لا تتقبل اضممار الفاعل، والعربية بوصفها لغة تعتمد اضممار الفاعل بامتياز. ويتناول البحث الأبعاد الصرفية، والتركيبية، والتداولية، والنفسيّة -اللسانية، والتاريخية-التطورية لهذه الظاهرة، بالإضافة إلى تحليل بيانات مدونات لغوية تمثل طيفاً واسعاً من اللهجات والأساليب، فضلاً عن مناقشة أنماط اكتساب اللغة الثانية وإشكاليات الترجمة المتصلة بحذف الفاعل ومآلاته.

وتعتمد الدراسة منهجاً متعدد التخصصات يجمع بين الأطر النظرية للقواعد التوليدية التحويلية والتحليل القائم على بيانات مدونات واسعة، كما تستفيد من نتائج تجريبية في مجال اكتساب اللغة عند الأطفال ودراسات حلّ الإحالة الضميرية. وتؤكد النتائج أنّ العربية، بما تتميز به من غنى صرفي وتراكيب نحوية مرنة، تتيح إضممار الفاعل بصورة منتظمة، في حين يقتصر ذلك في الإنجليزية على سياقات تداولية محدودة مثل صيغ الأمر وبعض أنماط الخطاب غير الرسمي. وتشير النتائج السايكو-لسانية إلى تباين في آليات المعالجة الإدراكية بين اللغتين عند تأويل البنى ذات الفاعل المضمّر.

ومن المنظور التاريخي، تكشف الدراسة عن مسار تطوري أسهم في ترسيخ القدرة على الإضممار في اللغات المضمرة للفاعل. كما تناقش بعض من مسلمات الدلالات النظرية لهذه النتائج في إطار نماذج ضبط المُعلّيمات ذات العلاقة في القواعد التوليدية التحويلية، وما يترتب عليها من تطبيقات عملية في اكتساب اللغة الثنائية وتعليمها. وتخلّص الدراسة إلى أنّ فهم ظاهرة حذف الفاعل وتصنيف أنماط الإضممار يستلزم تكاملاً بين مستويات التحليل الخمسة: الدلالي، والخطابي، والصرفي، والتركيبية، والتداولية.

الكلمات المفتاحية

مَعَلْمَةُ الفاعل الصفري، اللغات المضمرة للفاعل، حذف الفاعل، مستويات التحليل اللساني، النفس-لسانيات، اللسانيات التاريخية، تحليل المدونات، اكتساب اللغة.



1. Introduction

Subject omission, *null subject phenomenon* or *pro-dropping process*, is a syntactic process that varies across languages. Simply, it indicates the process of omitting the explicit subject, being noun or pronoun, in a sentence, especially if the subject can be recovered or inferred from context being implied; or via verbal morphological form. Being such intriguing phenomenon, subject dropping particularly reflects vital features of linguistic status, avoiding verbosity of expression, morphological dynamics, and configurability syntactic systems. It is part of the larger topic of zero or null anaphora. Yet, the relation between pro-drop languages and null anaphora is essentially related to the referential properties not to the null dummy pronoun phenomenon.

In the field of generative grammar, Chomsky (1981) introduced the concept of the pro-drop parameter which is a key feature in languages topic prominent rather than syntactic subject dominant within Universal Grammar, suggesting that languages differ systematically, syntactically and grammatically, in whether they incorporate the null subject option. Allowing subject omission setting, according to Chomsky, is a parameter dependent on the morphological and syntactic status of the linguistic systems concerned. Chomsky notes that, "Languages such as Italian and Spanish set the pro-drop parameter positively, allowing the omission of subjects due to their rich verbal morphology, while English sets it negatively, requiring explicit subjects" (Chomsky, 1981, p. 240).

Null-subject sentences and pro-dropping processes might be: Partial, where pronouns in specific are subjected to omission, discourse pro-dropping when the subject can be inferred relying on the context, and the null-subject structure forming a key parameter in the Universal Grammar theorem of TGG. (Hussein, 2010).

The feasibility of analyzing the process of subject omission is not only of a theoretical linguistic offset, but also has some off-premises practical implications in language acquisition, translatology, and computational linguistics to name but few fields. This study conducts a comparative analysis between English language and Arabic in this concern, viz, subject omission. Both languages occupy opposite extremity in the pro-drop spectrum: the former, English, is considered a non-pro-drop language, while Arabic in its Modern Standard and colloquial varieties versions is widely set as a pro-drop language.

Both languages react differently in accepting instances of subject ellipsis. Their systematic constraints and implicit linguistic drive motivate different criteria. In English, omitting the grammatical subject typically occurs in sharply restricted instances, such as informal speech or imperative structures. In casual discourse, for instance, one can say, "Hope you had a good day," thus dropping the 1st person subject (I). Whereas, in formal writing and most registers such omissions are considered ungrammatical and syntactically questionable. Haegeman (1994) then



opines this restriction stating that, “English, unlike Romance languages, does not permit null subjects in main clauses due to its weak verbal morphology and reliance on word order” (p. 122).

Arabic, in contrast, exposes a syntactic system that easifying subject dropping being of rich agreement morphology. Verbs in Arabic inflect for gender, person, and number, enabling semantically users to infer the subject from the verb. For instance, the verb [yaktub-u] يكتب means (=he writes,) with the 3rd person masc. Sing. subject embedded within the verb itself. Al-Balushi (2011) overviews the point, by saying that “subject pronouns are often omitted in Arabic because verbal morphology provides enough syntactic and semantic information to recover the referent” (p. 67).

Additionally, studying subject omission in English as non-drop language and Arabic as pro-drop language is due to their relevance in the world linguistic spectra. For English is increasingly becoming a global lingua franca. And, Arabic is the native language of over 300 million people which holds sharply specific sociolinguistic complexity being of diglossic status. Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) coexists with many regional dialects and registers. These facts, among others, make conducting a comparative analysis of both linguistically rich in pedagogically valuables and of moxie socio- psycho linguistic trends.

Moreover, the subject omission phenomenon widely intersects with discourse attributes, pragmatics and critical pragmatics. In Arabic as a pro-drop language, for example, once the referent is established, the user often drop the subject in following clauses to maintain discourse cohesion and cut redundancy. This adaptation, however, explicitly is aligned with Givón’s (1983) topic continuity theory, where “pronouns and zero anaphora tend to occur when referents are highly accessible or continuous in discourse” (p. 19). Conversely, English syntactic rules as a non-pro-drop language, override such austerity in discourse. The subjects are to be stated in all contexts bring clear or not.

Accordingly, this research paper attends to explore the syntactic, grammatical, morphological, and pragmatic aspects of subject omitting in English and Arabic. It tackles the following questions: (1) What properties, syntactic and morphological, govern subject omission in English and Arabic? (2) How does null subject structures function in discourse within the linguistic systems of English and Arabic? (3) Are there any implications of these quests for second language learning/acquisition and translation?

By bridging these questionable gabs, broader discussion of typological variation in syntax can be foreseen. The concluded understanding of the mechanism of linguistic encoding of discourse economy, grammatical and syntactic restrictions, and discourse coherence might be enhanced.



2. Subject Omission in English

Generally, English is classified as a non-pro-drop language. It typically accredits an overt subject in most syntactic structures. Such rigid requirement in English is reflection of the language's relatively poor verbal inflection system. English linguistic system provides limited morphological elements to identify the subject functionally. Unlike most richly inflected languages, English verb forms, however, keep consistent in using different forms for the subjects in the present tense, offering person / number distinctions minimally beyond the third person singular

(1) *He plays the lute* vs. *They play the lute*.

linguistically, such morphological impoverishment enforces selective restrictions on subject dropping phenomenon to a few well-defined cases governed by discourse-pragmatic quests rather than grammatical and syntactic acceptability.

Imperative construction is a well-recognized environment for pronoun-subject dropping in English. In the command

(2) *come in !* the subject **you** is obligatorily dropped, yet it is syntactically implied. Huddleston and Pullum (2002), devotedly stated that: "Imperatives in English obligatorily lack a syntactic subject, though the semantic subject is understood to be second person" (p. 927). Omission of the grammatical subjects in such imperative moods is universally observed, and uncontroversially accepted.

Diary-style writing, informal registers, and oral chatting constitute, particularly at the onset of utterances, some comprehensive media for subject omission., For example, one might note in his dairy that,

(3) *Today went to school late. Cut most lectures. Feeling bored now.*" where the **I pronoun** for 1st person is omitted throughout. As might well be noted, while these mechanism of omissions are more frequently noted in colloquial modes of expressions, and grammatically non-standard styles, they are pragmatically accepted and semantically comprehended. Biber et al. (1999) confirm that "conversational English often allows ellipsis of the subject, especially when the referent is already salient in the discourse" (p. 1043). Brevity and informality, in such contexts, widely override strict conventions of grammar.

In coordinated clauses, particularly with identical subjects, subject omission is well tolerated. For instance, in

(4) *He passed the exam early and went surfing.* the subject pronoun **he** is omitted. Though the process might not be atypical classic subject omission, but a form of ellipsis where the pronoun subject is not rearticulated for pragmatic and syntactic redundancy. Accordingly, Quirk et al. (1985) state that, "Coordination allows for the omission of repeated constituents when their recovery from context is straightforward" (p. 894).



With quite limited permissible instances of subject omission in English the declarative clauses accommodate restricted stances of the process. English, unlike pro-drop Arabic, does not approve freely subject omitting mechanism without having ungrammatical structures. The following sentence “Went to the school” is articulated in informal writing or speech; whereas, in formal English, the I pronoun is obligatorily cited. Meticulously, failing in tolerating subject omission systematically in main clauses classifies English as a non-pro-drop language.

Syntactically, the requirement for an explicit subject copes with the TGG Extended Projection Principle (EPP). The principle posits that all independent clauses must have a syntactic subject. However, the expletive subjects, namely, **it** and **there** are vocalized in specific constructions to form dummy subjects of no semantic weight to fulfill the syntactic requirement for a subject without any semantic agent as in the examples,

(5) **It** is raining right now.

(6) **There** is a man over there.

Chomsky (1981) argues that [English instantiates the EPP in a way that]“prevents subjectless clauses in tensed environments, [necessitating expletives as grammatical placeholders]. (p. 247).

Null subjects in infinitival and subordinate clauses, as a syntactic controlled subject ellipsis, where the subject is often omitted due to control structures is another relevant stance. In the sentence

(7) She wants to leave. The subject of the embedded clause to leave is understood to be the pronoun she even though it is not overtly expressed. Thus, the subject is semantically inferable. Carnie (2013), considers that the “Control theory provides the mechanism through which null subjects in non-finite clauses are interpreted via binding to a matrix clause argument” (p. 268).

Typologically, English, as a non drop, does not allow dropping the syntactic subject as that pro-drop languages do, it allows null subject in certain usage, namely, in informal speech, imperatives, and coordination. The omissions under such conditions are controlled by contextual inferability, and syntactic rigid rules rather than morphological facades in specific registers and syntactic scripts.

3. Subject Omission in Arabic

Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and most Arabic dialect are broadly classified as a pro-drop language, being of verbal rich inflection system which provides explicit pronoun marker, where subject omission is grammatically tolerated and mostly obligatory. Systematically in Arabic, the subject is to be dropped when the verb morphology overtly reflects the subject’s person, gender, and number. Morphologically, Ryding (2005) confirms that, “Arabic verbal morphology is sufficiently complex to obviate the need for overt subject pronouns in most declarative clauses” (p. 582). Duly, Arabic widely licenses subject omission.



For example, the verb **يذهب** [*yadhhabu*] means [he goes,] where the suffix and vowel pattern clearly indicate the 3rd person masculine singular subject, allowing the explicit subject pronoun [**هو** *huwa*] means **he** to be omitted without loss of grammaticality or reference.

Basically, subject dropping is not restricted to dialects and registers in Arabic, being a prototypical pro-drop language ; rather, it extends to formal registers, journalese , academic discourse, and classical writing. Brustad (2000) adds , “In spoken Arabic, subject pronouns are often dropped unless there is a specific need for emphasis or contrast” (p. 89), which in turns conveys subtle pragmatic implications beyond grammatical function.

In Modern Standard Arabic, sentences :show that the verb might carry the subject features of number, gender, and tense directly as in the examples:

(٨) ذهب إلى المدرسة [*dhahaba ila al-madrasat-i*] , means [He went to school.]

(٩) نذهب الآن [*nadhhab-u al-aan*] means [We are going now]

The verb ذهب [*dhahab-a*] shows the 3rd person masc. singular, whereas نذهب [*nadhhabu*] marks 1st person plural. Thus, turns the explicit pronoun optional in the case هو [*huwa* he] or نحن [*nahnu* we] , and usually omitted unless encodes emphasis or for elucidation.

As for colloquial Arabic dialects, dropping the subject pronouns is usual. For instance, in the sentence:

(١٠) رحت للشغل [*ruht il-shughal*] means [I went to work]

The verb رحت [*ruht*], which carries the 1st person sing. marker [-t] replaces أنا [*ana* I] the subject pronoun which is usual in natural speech. Al-Khatib (2013) states that “the omission of subject pronouns in Arabic dialects reflects not only morphological licensing but also conversational norms that favor economy and efficiency” (p. 245).

Additionally, in coordinated clauses and embedded structures omitting of subject is usual. In the following example:

(١١) ذهبت إلى السوق واشترت بعض الفاكهة [*dhahabt-u ila al-su:q-i wa ishtarayt ba'd al-fakihah-i*] means (I went to the market and bought some fruit)

the subject is marked explicitly in the verb ذهبت [*dhahabt*] means [I went], but it is omitted in the coordinated verb اشترت [*ishtarayt*] means [I bought] being inferred clearly to be the same. Such elliptic form is made possible via the morphological agreement on the verbs, and the pragmatic assumption of topic unity.

In classical Arabic literature and the Qur'an, subject omission serves specific rhetorical and stylistic element to create sense of action-emphasis, and universality; or discard attention away from the performer to the verbal event. Omitting the overt subjects then contributes to the timeless quality of the text and solemnity.



Al-Azami (2003) propounds that “the elliptical constructions, including subject omission, in Qur’anic Arabic are not random but carry theological and rhetorical weight, highlighting the divine action rather than human agency” (p. 157).

In spite of its flexibility, Arabic language occasionally requires overt subject pronouns for disambiguation or emphasis. When multiple prospective subjects of various genders or number are involved in discourse, or contrast subjects are intended, pronouns are reintroduced to clear any confusion. For instance

[*ana dhahabtu, walakin huwa lam yadhhab*] أنا ذهبت، ولكن هو لم يذهب (١٢) means I went, but he did not go

The explicit pronouns أنا I and هو he are used to highlight contrast between the subjects. Al-Masri (2015) explains that “overt pronouns in Arabic often carry a contrastive or emphatic function, serving as tools for discourse clarity and emphasis.” (p. 132).

Subject omission in Arabic , pragmatically and discursively meant, is closely related to topic continuity and referent accessibility. Givón (1983) states that “pro-drop languages exhibit high rates of zero anaphora when the referent is highly accessible or continues as the topic of discourse” (p. 19). Thus, in Arabic omitting the subjects is frequently done when the referent is introduced and maintains topic, for discourse economy.

Similarly, with generative grammar the permissibility of subject dropping in Arabic supports the null subject parameter , as Jaeggli and Safir (1989) suggest that “languages with rich agreement morphology permit the omission of overt subjects because the verb provides sufficient syntactic and semantic information to identify the subject” (p. 26). Theoretically then, , Arabic linguistic system can be an perfect example of the positive setting of the null subject parameter with its rich verbal morphology.

The implications pro-drop in Arabic linguistic system extends to second language acquisition/learning and translation. Some Arabic learners of English transfer this feature of subject dropping into English, effecting errors/or mistakes as in

(١٣) Is raining” instead of “It is raining.”

This negative transfer phenomenon may stem from discrepancies in syntactic and morphological quests between the languages. Al-Khatib (2017) notes that, “understanding the structural reasons behind subject omission in Arabic can help educators anticipate and address common errors made by Arabic-speaking learners of English” (p. 311).

To recapitulate, in Arabic being rich with its verbal inflection, discourse conventions, and pragmatic preferences subject omission then is the norm rather than the exception which contrasts sharply with English grammar and morphology. Studying subject omission constrains in Arabic not only highlights



cross-linguistic syntactic variation but also intensify aspects of understanding fields of language acquisition, translation, and discourse analysis.

4. Morphological and Syntactic phenomena of Subject Omission in Arabic and English

The phenomenon of subject omission in Arabic and English can be extended through the interaction between morphological status and syntactic rules. These linguistic dimensions implement the structural constraints governing subject dropping without effecting the grammaticality and semantic clarity of the expression.

4.1 Morphological Foundations

Verbal inflection in Arabic morphology plays important role in allowing subject omission. Verbs, however, are morphologically rich with inflectional markers that reflect person, number, and gender of the subject which allows interlocutors to infer the subject itself depending solely on the verb form. As such, the explicit pronoun turn into redundant in most cases.

Ryding (2005) confirms that, “The extensive morphological marking on Arabic verbs renders the subject pronoun optional, as the verb itself contains sufficient information about the subject’s person and number” (p. 581).

The verb form **يذهب** [*yadhabu*], for example, indicates 3rd person masculine singular, whereas **نذهب** [*nadhabu*] shows the 1st person plural. These morphological references present strict internal syntactic factors that necessitate the grammatical need for subject identification.

Rich verbal morphology in pro-drop languages typically in Arabic, with complex agreement systems makes explicit subjects unnecessary. Jaeggli and Safir (1989) highlight subject omission phenomenon in their null subject parameter theory, suggesting that “languages with rich subject-verb agreement permit the omission of overt subjects because the verb morphology suffices for subject identification” (p. 27). thus, in Arabic, morphological markers are so robust that they nullify the syntactic prerequisite for an overt subject.

Conversely, English linguistic system tolerates limited subject-verb agreement morphology. Except for 3rd person singular present tense suffix *-s* but verbs do not systematically mark person or gender distinctions. Consequently, the overt indication of the subject is syntactically required for in sentence’s referential needs.

Huddleston and Pullum (2002) note that “English verbs provide limited morphological information, and this impoverishment means that subjects cannot generally be omitted without rendering the sentence ungrammatical or ambiguous” (p. 924). The lack of agreement morphological agreement categorizes English a non-pro-drop language. The explicit subject is an obligatory syntactic element in tensed clauses.



4.2 Syntactic Foundations

Apart from morphology, syntactic norms impose strict constraints on subject omission in Arabic and English which are influenced by Chomsk's Extended Projection Principle (EPP), "which prerequisites that all tensed clauses have a subject in their surface syntactic structure", (Chomsky, 1981). Notably, each language satisfies this principle differently.

In English, the EPP is strictly observed. A subject must be exhibited in tensed clauses. English significantly uses expletive pronouns as **it** or **there** to substitute the subject when no semantic subject is exhibited. These expletive subjects are employed as dummy without semantic implication to satisfy the syntactic need. As such, dropping the subject is ungrammatical in English, except in limited cases as imperatives, where the subject is understood as an implicit **you**.

In Arabic, according to Ouhalla (1999), "the rich inflectional morphology licenses a null subject in the syntactic subject position, fulfilling the EPP without the need for an overt NP" (p. 65). Then, Arabic linguistic system observes the EPP differently because of its rich verbal morphology. The morphological government constrains on the verb is enough to project a null subject or null pronoun that amalgamates the subject position without surface realization - a syntactic state underpins the systematic dropping of subjects in Arabic.

Mustafa M. (2023, pp45-62) stipulates that, "Arabic syntax features control and raising structures that facilitate null subjects in subordinate clauses". In the following sentence

(١٤) أريد أن أذهب [urīd an adhhab] means [I want to go], the embedded infinitival clause أن أذهب [an adhhab] has no overt subject but comes by it from the matrix clause. The syntactic theory as Gamiller, M., Sadler L. (2023, pp 121-148) states that the "control accounts for this by positing that the null subject of the infinitival is controlled by the matrix subject." English, similarly recognize congruent constructions but concedes overt subject in main clauses, which highlights recognized syntactic divergence.

To recapitulate, discourse factors intersect with syntactic and morphological rules to regulate subject omission as Givón (1983) claims and argues that "zero subject usage is closely linked to topic continuity, where a known referent is maintained across utterances, enabling omission". Thus, Arabic's pro-drop feature is enhanced by pragmatic rules of "topicality and information flow", allowing omission when the referent remains salient. Alghamdi, A. (2018) who offers a broad overview of how sentence structure viz, topics, focus, word order variation, and pragmatic factors governs different Arabic dialects and spoken varieties.

Briefly, the morphological richness of Arabic verbs with the syntactic mechanisms of null pronouns and control structures outline a robust structure for



the arrays of subjects omission . The verbal morphology, in gist, present a clear marker of the subject identity, and syntactic implicitly.

Whereas, English's verbal morphology and rigid syntactic rules require an overt subject in most contexts. The utility of expletives and strict EPP in English averts free subject dropping.

To comprehend such morphological and syntactic facades help in clarifying the typological discrepancy between Arabic and English; and justifies learners' of each language incertitude with subject omission in a 2nd language contexts.

5. Pragmatic and Discourse Considerations in Subject Omission

Subject omission is not only licensed by syntactic and morphological factors but by pragmatic and discourse quests which have crucial effects, especially in languages like Arabic of high degree of subject ellipsis permissibility . Essentially, pragmatics mainly concerns with the ways context contributes to meaning; and discourse analysis focal point is the focus on the structure and flow of spoken or written language beyond the sentence level. These perspectives form vivid insights into when and why to drop subjects. Pragmatic factors govern subject omission can be recognized as follows:

Firstly, topic continuity, as a key conception in the pragmatics of subject omission , according to Givón (1983), can be justified as “zero anaphora is most likely to occur when the referent remains the continuous discourse topic” (p. 19). Interlocutors of pro-drop languages often tend to omit repeated mentions of the subject in subsequent clauses or sentences when it has already been introduced in discourse. Significantly, Givon (1983) claims that such omission does not cause in confusion, since the referent is kept salient in the hearer's mind.

To elaborate, , in the following exemplified narrative one can realize the discourse dynamics of subject omission:

شاهد الولد طائرا طار في السماء بين السحاب واختفى خلف غيوم سوداء (١٥)

[shahada al-waladu ṭā'ir-an. Ṭāra fī al-samā' bayna assahab -i. wa Ikhtafā khalf al-ghuyūm assawda'a.] means

[The boy saw a bird. It flew in the sky between patches of clouds. It disappeared behind some dark clouds]

Considerably, in the second and third sentences the explicit subject **the bird** is omitted depending on the continuity of the topic reference in the first sentence. Thus rich verbal morphology of the verbs **ṭāra, ikhtafā** easifies the inference of the subject based on the discourse. Typically in English the subjects are to be repeated unless they are coordinated within the same clause. The narrative in English would likely be read as follows:

[The boy saw a bird.] [The bird flew in the sky between patches clouds.] [It disappeared behind some dark clouds.]

Secondly, focus and emphasis perspectives can made another pragmatic effects on subject omission. In Arabic, Givon (1983) explains that subjects are often



dropped been not in focus. When contrastive or emphatic meaning is intended, he states, the subject pronoun is retained or even fronted for clarity.

The following sentence:

ذهبت الى السوق . ولكنه ذهب الى المدرسة (١٦)

[Dhahabtu ilā al-sū q-I walākin -hu dhahaba ilā al-madrasah-i.] means

[I went to the market, but he went to school.] The pronoun هو [huwa – he] is used to contrast with the speaker [أنا – I].

In English, however, such emphasis is marked with a stress or repetition. The subject pronoun should be explicitly observed regardless of emphasis.

Thirdly, the information structure of a sentence also decides subject omission. Information structure clearly refers to the manner in which interlocutors organize and prioritize their given information versus new information.

In Arabic, known information which is inferable from context is to be omitted when the subject is realized as old information. Being so, the subject needs not be repeated unless it is the focal point of contrast or clarification.

Fourthly, genre and register determine subject omission. In Arabic, specifically, informal contexts or novel/ novelette telling, omitting a subject is frequent. In formal writing and academic prose, subjects are explicitly marked. Yet, subject dropping occurs when morphological and contextual prompts are obvious. Conversely, English marks limited variation in this concern; explicit subjects are nearly always needed regardless of context, register or genre.

Fifthly, conversational implicature in discourse implicates how implicit subject is inferred. Interlocutors depend on shared maxims and the (Grice, 1975) cooperative principle to infer omitted. In the following:

A: رأيت محمدا اليوم [Ra'aytu Muhamad-an alyawm.)] means [I saw him today.]

B: أقال لك شيئا؟ [Aqāla laka shay' -an?] means [Did he say something to you?]

In B the subject is omitted because it is explicitly referred to in A's statement.

This subject ellipsis depends on shared discourse and pragmatic reasoning.

Sixthly, avoidance of redundancy and verbosity as a pragmatic factor, finally, motivates subject omission. Padding, wording and redundancy, while in specific are useful for emphasis or clarity, can distract discourse fluency, and the natural flow of communication, particularly in oral narratives. The repeated subject pronouns might disrupt the rhythm and cohesion of narration.

As such, subject dropping in pro-drop languages, mainly Arabic is licensed not only by morphology and syntax but also by pragmatic and discourse factors, which include topic continuity, focus structure, contrast, information status, conversational context, and stylistic norms. Whereas, English, is overtly impel by its poor agreement morphology, thus count s on overt subjects to maintain coherence and clarity. Both languages, significantly, expose pragmatically motivated modes of ellipsis, the form subject omission are effected by fundamental structural and communicative discrepancies.



6. Diachronic Perspectives on Subject Omission

Diachronic linguistics divulges important transformations in the grammatical structures of languages and usage conventions that govern subjects omission or overt expression . A diachronic perspective on subject omitting in English indicates that it was more flexible in its subject usage than it is today. Old English (approximately 450–1150 AD), according to Fischer, van Kemenade, Koopman, and van der Wurff (2000), “had a system of verb endings that made it possible to identify the subject of a verb even when the subject noun or pronoun was not explicitly stated” (p. 112), which made it in closer alignment with pro-drop typology than Modern English.

Notably, Middle English (1150–1500), had begun to lose much of its verbal inflection. Such morphological curtailment induced increased dependence on fixed word order and overt subject realization . Lightfoot (1991) perceives that , “The collapse of the Old English inflectional system necessitated a syntactic strategy for conveying grammatical relationships, most notably requiring subjects to be overt” (p. 49). Subject omission phenomenon had become by Early Modern English period (1500–1700) practically obsolete. And, subjects were consistently marked overtly even in informal discourse and registers.

By contrast, Arabic has maintained its ranking as a pro-drop language across its historical stages. The standardized form of classical Arabic dating back to the 7th century, shows a complex system of verb conjugation which explicitly marks person, number, and gender. A morphological status which facilitates subject omitting. The verb forms often suffice to reflect the subject. Versteegh (1997) states that , “The structure of Classical Arabic is one where the verb morphology permits dropping the subject, with discourse playing a crucial role in interpretation” (p. 88). For instance, the verb يكتب [yaktubu] means [he writes] in Classical Arabic, with the subject **he pronoun** embedded within the verb morphology. The use of [huwa] هو , in this contexts, is not needed unless required for emphasis. Diachronic evidence confirms that this pro-drop perspective has been observed in Arabic over centuries.

In Arabic, spoken dialects have evolved remarkably and ramified from Classical Arabic and themselves. Mainly, most of these dialects have maintained the perspective of subject omission.

Commenting on the diachronic development of Arabic, particularly its resistance to morphological erosion, Owens (2001) claims that “the conservative nature of Arabic morphology, particularly in its verbal system, has enabled a continuity of syntactic possibilities such as subject omission that were lost in other languages due to morphological erosion” (p. 142).

Thus, unlike English, Arabic linguistic system has maintained its inflectional verb system with syntactic structures that permit ellipsis. Ferguson (1959) adds that ,” the diglossic situation in Arabic, where speakers use both Modern Standard



Arabic (MSA) and one or more dialects, supports the maintenance of pro-drop syntax". In spite of the syntactic differences between dialects and MSA, they allow subject omission recognizing the same verbal morphology.

Eigible, O. (2023) maintains that an "interesting point in the diachronic discussion is how language contact can temporarily influence subject usage". He adds that "bilingual Arabic speakers in English often show reduced subject omission in Arabic when speaking in bilingual contexts". This influence, however, seems to be stylistic rather than grammatical. The main prescriptive of pro-drop phenomenon of Arabic language remains intact, marking rigid diachronic resilience.

Reversely, Modern English, modulated by decades of morphological oversimplification, has no mechanism for subject ellipsis. Informal texting and note-taking registers most often omit subjects which are pragmatic and register-specific, not grammatical. It is wildly believed that the systemic modifications happened in the transition from Old English to Modern English impeded the syntactic availability that verifies systematic subject omission.

Significantly, diachronic perspectives reveal a sharp divergence in the evolution of subject omission mechanism between the two languages. The contrast between English and Arabic reveals the impact of historical structural changes in morphology on shaping the syntax and pragmatics of a language's development history.

Overtly, English conversed from a pro-drop language to a strictly non-pro-drop language owing to strict morphological and syntactic simplification. Arabic retained its remarkable morphology and maintained a consistent grammatical dynamism for subject omission.

7. Psycholinguistic Clues to Subject Omission

Subject omission is a topic of syntactic and morphological perspective, yet psycholinguistics outlines a complementary parameter to the processes of human mind involved and interprets structures with omitted subjects. Psycholinguistics explores how languages are formulated and conceptualized in real time, analyzing cognitive load, memory, inference, etc. all of which are feasible to highlight subject dropping.

Psycho linguistically, it is claimed that subject omission does not inevitably enhance cognitive processing awkwardness, perceptibly in languages with extended verbal morphology like Arabic. Notably, when subject pronouns are dropped in contexts with salient referent, understanding is often more efficient. In this concern, Carminati (2002) suggests the *Position of Antecedent Hypothesis* (PAH), which proposes that null subject pronouns are deduced tightly when the antecedent amalgamate a syntactically eminent position. "The parser favors the subject position as the antecedent for a null pronoun, which facilitates rapid integration of ellipsis in processing" (Carminati, 2002, p. 122).



To be exemplified, Arabic is a language with its robust morphological cues embedded in the verb has no significant difficulty in processing null subjects. In the following

ذهب إلى السوق (١٧) [*Dhahaba ilā al-sūq.*] means [(He) went to the market] The verb [dhahaba] in the example above encodes the 3rd person masc. singular, so speakers of Arabic can easily infer the omitted subject without showing any cognitive tightness. Psycholinguistic studies have confirms that the presence or absence of the pronoun does not act on comprehension accuracy when contextual clues are present. As Abu-Rabia (1997) confirms , “Arabic speakers demonstrate high competence in resolving null subject references, even in ambiguous narratives, due to reliance on verb morphology and discourse cues” (p. 74).

In contrast, English speakers according to Arnold et al. (2000), “ rely heavily on overt pronouns for subject identification; when these are omitted, listeners must expend additional cognitive resources to infer the referent, which slows comprehension” (p. 151).

They practically experience greater processing difficulty when subjects are omitted, because the English language lacks the inflectional morphology that otherwise help identify the referent.

For instance, the sentence follows:
(18)Went to the shop, bought milk.

is only comprehensible in a contextualized and informal setting. Formally, in controlled psycholinguistic environments, such sentences have been shown to create ambiguity and cause processing time- consuming. Additionally, active/working memory plays a critical perspective in the way subject omission is processed.

In pro-drop languages, communicators rely vitally on discourse memory and referent pursuing across sentences. This skill, however, seems to develop early among native speakers. Studies involving children acquiring Arabic, among other languages, show that they can comprehend / produce sentences with null subjects at earlier stages than English-speaking children. Valian (1991) opines that “Children acquiring pro-drop languages begin using null subjects earlier and more frequently than children acquiring non-pro-drop languages, indicating that the input language’s structure significantly shapes acquisition pathways” (p. 15).

Bilingual speakers, experimentally approved, of pro-drop and non-pro-drop languages can dynamically control their parsing activities depending on the linguistic context. Sorace and Serratrice (2009) , “[reveal] the interplay between syntactic representation and cognitive control in managing language-specific subject expression patterns” (p. 195). Significantly, Arabic-English bilinguals show flexibility in that they expect overt subjects in English but readily interpret null subjects in Arabic without confusion.



Such flexibility, in sentence production, as psycholinguistic evidence confirms the idea that subject dropping in pro-drop languages reduces “”production load. Ferreira (2003) confirms this statement in the *Accessibility Theory*, stating, “Speakers tend to omit elements that are easily retrievable by the listener, thereby optimizing fluency and minimizing effort” (p. 7).

Thus, it can be theorized that with salient subject in discourse, interlocutors often choose the most economical form of omission to reduce articulatory effort. In both comprehension and production, Kehler and Rohde (2013), observe that “null subjects correlate with high referential predictability, supporting theories that tie subject omission to discourse coherence and cognitive economy” (p. 236).

As such, frequency and predictability of referents influence the process of subject omission. Psycholinguistic research findings clearly supports the theorem that subject omission is not only grammatically permissible, but also cognitively efficient. Rich verb morphology and discourse structure of some pro drop languages as Arabic facilitate the use and interpretation of null subjects. Whereas, In English as a non-pro-drop language, the absence of inflectional cues makes subject dropping more cognitively demanding and less frequent. Finally, subject omission, as psychologic data, reflects some complex interplay between linguistic structure and cognitive function, whatsoever.

8. Corpus Observations on Pro-Drop Subject Use in English and Arabic

Corpus linguistics, which depends on analyzing large and naturally occurring datasets of spoken and written language, is a feasible empirical method for studying pro-drop subject use. Through the use of corpora, linguists can quantitatively assess the patterns of subject dropping, its frequency and context in English and Arabic, offering evidence for theoretical claims about grammatical and discourse quests.

In English, being classified as a non-pro-drop language, subject omission is infrequent and restricted to informal contexts. However, corpus studies confirm that English allows subject ellipsis under specific pragmatic conditions, such as diary writing, notetaking, headlines, and imperatives and the like.

Haegeman (1990), states that “English permits null subjects in root clauses under specific discourse conditions, such as diary contexts or imperatives, though it does not possess the syntactic properties of a true pro-drop language” (p. 233).

In contrast, in Arabic corpora according to Rasekh-Mahand et al. (2013), “the omission of the subject is not only syntactically licensed but pragmatically favored in discourse contexts where the subject is easily recoverable” (p. 162).

Thus, Arabic consistently shows systematic use of subject omission in both spoken and written corpora. The verb morphology in Arabic reliably encodes the person, number, and gender of the subject, allowing for its omission without ambiguity.



Besides, Corpus analysis also reveals that the rate of subject omission varies across Arabic dialects, yet remains a stable feature of all varieties. As Aoun, Benmamoun, and Choueiri (2010) remark, “Arabic, across both standard and colloquial varieties, displays robust and productive null subject usage that is morphologically and syntactically entrenched” (p. 76).

In Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) corpora subject omission is even in formal texts, although less frequently than in dialectal speech.

In English corpora as Culicover and Winkler (2008) state: “ null subjects are typically licensed by information structure and context rather than grammatical features, indicating their derivation from ellipsis rather than syntactic omission” (p. 12).

It tends they claims to cluster around pragmatically marked environments such as imperatives, headlines, and conversational ellipsis. These are not evidence of a grammatical pro-drop system, but rather reflect stylistic or discourse-driven ellipsis. Furthermore, in bilingual corpora as reported by Albirini (2016), “Code-switching data from Arabic-English bilinguals indicate an awareness of the contrasting subject requirements in the two languages, with speakers adhering to the grammatical norms of each” (p. 219)

To round off, corpus facts highlight the theoretical classification of Arabic as a canonical pro-drop language, with frequent, syntactically motivated subject omission in a variety of dialects. English, by contrast, is a non-pro-drop, with subject ellipsis which occurs in strictly governed, pragmatic contexts. Corpora analysis not only confirms these linguistic differences but also map the interaction between grammar, discourse, and register in shaping subject realization .



7. Conclusion

This paper has stated that pro-dropping is a complex linguistic phenomenon created by a group of morphological, syntactic, pragmatic, psycholinguistic, and diachronic factors. The discussion illustrates, by comparing English to Arabic, as an examples of languages posted at opposite polarity of the pro-drop spectrum, how language-specific features control the implicit /explicit presence of subjects in sentences.

Arabic with its rich verbal morphology, licenses subject dropping as a grammatically permissible, which is a frequent employed dynamism. The conjugations of verbs in Arabic linguistic system naturally encode person, number, and gender, thus allowing the subject recovery from the verb itself without being explicit. This morphological spectrum coincides with syntactic structures that fit in with null subjects and pragmatic quests that allow omission when the referent can be inferred from discourse context. Psycholinguistic analysis verifies this phenomenon by showing that Arabic speakers, in general, can process null subjects structures proficiently with ease.

Contrastly, English has evolved limited process of pro-drop because of historical dripping of inflectional morphology and the increased adaptation to fixed word order and explicit subjects to mark grammatical relations. In restricted cases, English shows context-dependent subject omission, e.g. in imperatives, informal discourse, and discourse genres like diary entries. Pragmatically, such usages indicates that subject omission in English is mainly controlled, discourse-driven phenomenon rather than syntactic permissibility. With the psycholinguistic difficulties English interlocutors face in comprehending the missing subjects the classification of English as a non-pro-drop language is further verified.

Educators can mitigate recalcitrant implications by highlighting learners' awareness of pro-drop vs. non-pro-drop typologies and offering contrastive analysis. The contrast between English and Arabic pro-drop dynamism has important pedagogical and translating implications. Learners of English language whose first language is Arabic may drop required subjects, whereas, English learners of Arabic language may tend to insert irrelevant pronouns, leading to redundancy. Translation between the English and Arabic or vice versa requires thoughtful handling of subject pronouns. Translators should skilfully decide when to insert or drop subjects to preserve grammaticality and soundness in the (TL). Psycholinguistically, the impact of morphosyntactic cues in facilitating subject dropping during language acquisition is emphasized. In acquiring Arabic, children naturally adopt null subjects showing strict sensitivity to pro-drop verbal morphology. Whereas, children, English-speaking, naturally produce overt subjects at early ages, following the syntactic and morphological cues of their language. Then, it is deduced that acquisition trajectories are shaped jointly by frequency, morphology, and syntactic structures as relevant. Moreover, corpus-



based findings underpin the morphological and pragmatic dynamism of subject omitting in natural language use. Arabic corpora show substantial subject dropping where verbal morphology in context is adequate for interpretation. English corpora, however, highlight limited and pragmatically conditioned perspectives of subject dropping. Sociolinguistically, understanding subject omission let language learners understand nuances of grammaticality and pragmatics in the target languages. Arabic learners, can recognize when dropping subject is obligatory or optional to achieve naturalness. English learners benefit from awareness that while overt subjects are generally required, pragmatic contexts allow omissions, especially in informal speech. Finally, sociolinguistically, dialectal variation of Arabic and English has its vital role in allowing subject omission.





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