

## Pronoun Dropping in ChiShona: A Comparative Approach

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**Abstract.** The issue of pronoun dropping has widely been established amongst Romance languages. While it is generally claimed that most morphologically agglutinative languages have pro-drop properties, there is a need to investigate and establish how different languages fair with this notion and note if there are any language peculiar idiosyncratic properties. This paper analyses pro-drop properties of the chiShona language, making comparisons to the well documented and prototypical pro-drop Italian language. The paper is largely comparative and descriptive in nature with Italian and English as our reference points for pro-dropping and non-pro-dropping respectively. Our findings are that chiShona is clearly a pro-drop language, characteristics of which tally with most properties that identify with this phenomenon in Italian. However, chiShona has its own idiosyncratic properties that differ from Italian, for instance the *wh*-word can freely occupy the position immediately after the complementizer and also the post sentential position without vitiating the intended questioning. The *wh*-word in chiShona has much free play to the extent of occupying the final position in the sentence. In terms of subject omission in weather verbs, the difference between chiShona and Italian is that in Italian, the existence of the subject pronoun makes the sentence ungrammatical whereas in chiShona it remains a grammatical option. Our findings support the pro-drop phenomenon as a universal language parameter that however exhibit language internal idiosyncratic differences.

**Keywords:** *pro-drop, complementizer, that-trace, parameters, chiShona, Italian.*

### Introduction

This paper focuses on the notion of pronoun dropping in chiShona, focusing on the pro-drop parameter, which Chomsky (1981) says is typically found in most of the Romance languages like Italian. We proffer a comparative study through investigating whether the pro-drop properties that are characteristic of Romance languages are also found in chiShona. ChiShona is a Bantu language (S10) spoken in Zimbabwe by approximately 75% of the population (Nyika, 2008, p. 459). Though it is difficult to get the exact population figures of chiShona speakers because of recent mass migrations during the decade of crisis that ended a couple of years ago, the speakers are understood to be well over ten million. ChiShona is regarded as a national language together with Ndebele in Zimbabwe. In a country where English is the official language, the two national languages are diglossically ranked second and they handle the day to day informal conversations. At the expense of indigenous varieties, English assumes the official language status and also the medium of instruction in schools and government. It is also spoken as a minor language in parts of neighboring countries like southern Malawi, western Mozambique, southern Zambia and eastern Botswana. It is morphologically agglutinative, exhibiting an elaborate derivational and inflectional system with affixation as the major mechanism for word formation. It follows the Subject-Verb-Object word ordering.

Our research is based on the generalization that Bantu languages are pro-drop languages (cf. Zeller, 2004, 2008). ChiShona is one of the many Bantu languages, which, despite documented similarities, exhibit variations as well.

The aim of this paper, therefore, is to establish if chiShona qualifies as a pro-drop language in the similar way as the non-Bantu language families do, comparing to Romance languages such as Italian, Spanish etc. The objectives of the study are mainly centered on finding out if chiShona qualifies as a pro-drop language; if the pro-drop properties function in the same way as they do in Italian. We will also try to descriptively account for why the chiShona syntax allows the pro-drop parameter to operate. In order to clearly determine the nature of satisfaction of the parameter in chiShona, this paper aims to provide a comparative analysis with the Italian language. The choice of Italian is necessitated by the fact that it is a well-known pro-drop language the properties of which have been extensively studied. We will also make references to English, a non pro-drop language, so that we can clearly evaluate the position of chiShona as regards to the pro-drop phenomenon.

The pro-drop concept once attracted a lot of attention in the linguistic theory and is arguably the most studied of the Universal Grammar (UG) parameters. However, besides the generalization that Bantu languages are pro-drop, little has been done to establish this phenomenon in specific languages and to test its defining heuristics. The phenomenon is of a crucial importance in the linguistic theory because of the fact that it co-occurs with topical issues in Bantu morphosyntax like subject and object marking (Mugari, 2013; Bresnan, 2001; Demuth and Harford, 1999).

Recent research on pro-drop has proposed a version of the parameter which deviates from the founding characteristics. Neeleman and Szendroi (2005, 2007), followed by Massam,

Peter and Wang (2012) among others, discuss a type of pro-drop which is obtained from such languages as Chinese and Japanese which they call radical pro-drop or discourse pro-drop characteristic to poorly inflected languages. This is, however, different from the type we pursue here because it does not belong to agreement based category.

The data for this paper was obtained from the secondary sources for both Italian and English. The chiShona data was collected by the author, as the first language speaker, and additionally English glossing was sought from other native speakers of the language using a data verification method. The data was qualitatively analyzed through comparing chiShona to Italian and applying the defining heuristics of the pro-drop parameter to chiShona data.

## Literature Review

Intensive work on the pro-drop parameter has been done mainly on European languages like Italian, French, English, etc by scholars like Rizzi (1982), Chomsky (1981) and Burzio (1986). Tuller (1982) investigates some of pro-drop properties in Hausa, a language spoken in the greater part of West Africa and Fannami and Mua'zu (2011) looks at Kanuri largely spoken in Nigeria. The parameter has been applied to a host of Bantu languages among others; Lubukusu spoken in Kenya (Situma, 1998), Denya of Cameroon (Abangma, 1992) and Ikalanga of Botswana and Zimbabwe (Letsholo, 2013), albeit not in detail.

Chomsky (1981) outlines and explains all the properties of the pro-drop parameter. In order to clearly illustrate how the properties work, he makes a comparison between Italian, English and French. This paper is going to use insights from these scholars of European languages to investigate how chiShona qualifies to be a pro-drop language. A pro-drop language (from pronoun-dropping) is a language with tensed sentences that consist of empty pronominal elements, that is, certain pronouns may be omitted. These may be in some sense pragmatically inferable and the exact circumstances are quite intricate and language dependant. The phenomenon is also commonly referred to in linguistics as zero or null anaphora. Radford (2006, p. 24) opines that the parameter is binary in nature by virtue of having two alternative settings. Every language either has or does not have pro-drop properties.

Normal everyday utterances are usually punctuated by cases where some referents can be inferred from context. Proponents of the pro-drop phenomenon are of the view that pronouns which have such referents in some languages can be omitted or be phonologically null but structurally present. There are some languages that exhibit partial pro-dropping in that they allow deletion of only the subject pronoun and not any other pronoun. To understand how the pro-drop phenomenon works, we need to characterize its properties.

### *Properties of the Pro-drop Parameter*

A parameter is a term used in Government and Binding and the Minimalist Program for a specification of the

variations that a principle of grammar manifests among different languages. Government and Binding theory says there are only principles which can take different forms in different languages (Crystal, 1980, p. 249). Thus, for example, there is the HEAD parameter which specifies the positions of heads within phrases for instance head first in English, head last in Japanese (Crystal, 1980, p. 249). All parameters of variation are attributable to differences in features of particular items (e.g. the functional heads) in the lexicon (Baker, 2008, p. 353). Chomsky (2001, p. 2) notes that,

*parametric variation is restricted to the lexicon, and insofar as syntactic computation is concerned, to a narrow category of morphological properties, primarily inflectional.*

The pro-drop parameter that this paper deals with determines whether the subject of a finite clause can be suppressed. Those languages which permit it to be suppressed are pro-drop languages and those which require the presence of the subject of finite clauses are non-pro-drop languages. For a language to qualify as a pro-drop language, Chomsky (1981, p. 241) says that the language should have the following cluster of properties.

### *Free Inversion in Simple Sentences*

Free inversion in simple sentences is one of the canonical properties associated with the pro-drop parameter. With this property, a language should permit sentences with pre-verbal subjects to have counterparts in which the subject appears to the right of the verb. There is no change in meaning when the NP is moved to post-VP position. The inversion is said to be free because it is not dependant on any trigger (Riemsdijk and Williams, 1986, p. 301). This property is not the same as other types of inversion like Subject-Auxiliary inversion, locative inversion and other types of inversion in that, in this property, we can say that it is the verb which moves behind the subject, or the subject which moves to a position in front of the verb. But with other types like locative inversion, it is the locative phrase which inverts.

### *Subject Omission*

With this property, a language should have grammatical constructions after the subject of the sentence is omitted. In languages like English and French, a null subject pronoun may be used only in the subject position of a non-tensed sentence or clause, and nowhere else. In other words, an empty pronoun may occur only as subject of an infinitival clause. Languages that are known to be pro-drop ones like Italian and Spanish allow a zero pronoun in the subject position of a tensed clause.

### *Violation of the \*That-Trace Effect*

This property is revealed in wh-extraction questions. Earlier studies have shown that in languages like English, a sentence which contains an overt complementizer that is followed by a trace is ungrammatical, whereas a similar sentence with non overt complementizer is not. If a language does not allow the extraction of the noun phrase (NP) that comes after a complementizer, then the language

is a non pro-drop, but if it allows NP extraction, it then violates the \*that-trace effect and qualifies to be a pro-drop language.

#### *Empty Resumptive Pronoun in Embedded Clauses*

This property allows a language to have grammatical constructions after the omission of the resumptive pronoun in embedded clauses. The resumptive pronoun is defined by Sells (1984) as, “a pronoun that is interpreted as a bound variable whose antecedent is an operator.” The term operator should be assigned to any NP occupying an A-position which takes scope, specifically quantified NPs and wh-phrases. Resumptive pronouns occur predominantly in relative clauses.

#### *Long wh- Movement of Subject*

This property permits the free extraction of a subject from embedded clauses using wh-questions. By long wh-movement of subject, we mean the movement or extraction of a wh-phrase from the subject position across at least one clause boundary or bounding node. As will be seen in the next sections, this property also violates the \*that-trace effect. The only difference we can see between the two properties is the distance over which the extracted subject moves. In pro-drop languages, the long wh-movement from the nominative position is possible.

#### *On the Notion of Subject*

Li and Thompson (1976, p. 452–489) draw differences between a topic and a subject. Following their distinction, this paper is going to argue that the pre-verbal NP is the subject, and not a topic. In many languages, the verb shows obligatory agreement with the subject and topic predicate agreement is rare. This suggests that in languages which permit it, it is not obligatory. In chiShona we would see that the NP *vana* (children) in the sentence *1 a)* below looks more like a subject, since it is obligatory that it should control agreement marking. If it is not marked, then the sentence will become ungrammatical. As for a topic, one can choose to mark it or not on the verb as shown below:

- 1 a) Vana va -ka -rov-a mombe  
2children 2SM-past -beat-TV 10cattle  
'The children beat the cattle.'
- b) Mombe, vana va-ka -dzi -rov-a  
10cattle 2children SM-past-10OM-beat-TV  
'The cattle, the children beat (them).'
- c) Mombe, vana va -ka -rov-a  
10cattle 2children 2SM-past-beat-TV  
'The cattle, the children beat.'

The above example shows that while it is obligatory for the NP *vana* (children) to be marked in the verb, the Topic, as example *1 c)* shows, can be left unmarked on the verb.

## **Application of the Properties**

### *Free Inversion*

Italian is an SV (subject verb) language in terms of word order, but the overt NP subject is free to occupy the post-verbal position VS (verb subject) with the sentence remaining grammatical. Example *2 a)* shows the non-inverted construction, while *2 b)* shows the inverted example.

- 2 a) Gianni e' arrivato  
Gianni is arrived  
'Gianni has arrived.'
- b) E' arrivato Gianni  
Is arrived Gianni  
'Gianni has arrived.'

(Haegeman, 1994, p. 20)

Now, coming to the chiShona language, the subject usually comes before the verb as shown below.

- 3 a) Chipo a -imb -a  
1a/name 1aSM-sing-TV  
'Chipo has sung.'
- b) A-imb-a Chipo  
1aSM-sing-TV 1a/name  
'Has sung Chipo.'(LIT)  
'Chipo has sung.'

In *3 a)* above, the subject Chipo comes before the verb. The question is whether or not chiShona can invert the subject like Italian. Example *3 b)* shows that such inversion is possible in chiShona. It shows that the subject Chipo can take the post-verbal position and still be grammatical. It is also interesting to note that even after the inversion, the tones and stress patterns of the construction do not change. If we try to apply the above property of free inversion to the English language, we will see that subjects cannot invert, as shown below;

- 4 a) Your wife has phoned  
b) \*Has phoned your wife

In *4 b)* above, the sentence becomes ungrammatical because the subject 'your wife' has taken the post-verbal position. So, this property of free inversion is not applicable to English, a typical non-pro-drop language.

### *Subject Omission*

Pro-drop languages are usually known for allowing the overt NP which is the subject of finite clauses to remain unexpressed. Thus in Italian, the subject can be unrealized as shown below in *5 b)*:

- 5 a) Gianni ha cantata (Gianni has sung)  
b) Ha cantata (S/he has sung)

(Grimshaw and Lodovici, 1995, p. 558)

In the previous examples, 5 *b*) remains grammatical even if the overt NP subject Gianni is absent. Research on the chiShona language reveals that it can allow the overt NP subject to remain unexpressed as Italian does. Consider the examples below.

- 6 a) Chipo a -imb -a  
 la/name 1aSM-sing-TV  
 ‘Chipo has sung.’  
 b) A-imb-a  
 1aSM-sing-TV  
 ‘S/he has sung.’

Example 6 *b*) above indicates that even if the subject is omitted the sentence remains grammatical just like 6 *a*). Example 6 *b*) shows that chiShona, like Italian which is a typical pro-drop language, also permits the omission of the subject.

Still on the issue of subject omission, there is an issue of weather-verbs. In Italian, the subjects of weather verbs such as rain are necessarily omitted for the sentence to remain grammatical as is shown below.

- 7) (\*Cio) piove  
 (It) rains (3sg)  
 ‘It is raining.’

(Haegeman, 1994, p. 20)

In the above example, if the items in parenthesis with asterisks are included, the sentence will be ungrammatical. So, the pronoun must be omitted to make the sentence grammatical. The matter is different with English; the subject position must be filled by a pronoun as shown in example 8 below.

- 8 a) \*Is raining  
 b) It is raining

The above example 8 *a*) is ungrammatical because there is no pronoun, but 8 *b*) is grammatical because there is a pronoun filling the subject position. Now, let us consider how chiShona handles this as illustrated by the following examples:

- 9 a) Ku-ri ku - nay-a  
 15/it-is 15infinitive - rain-TV  
 ‘It is raining.’  
 b) (Iko) kuri ku - nay-a  
 PRO 15/it-is 15infinitive-rain-TV  
 ‘It is raining.’

Elements in parentheses in 9 *b*) are optional. In the above examples, we also find chiShona remaining grammatical even if the pronoun is omitted. ChiShona does not differ from Italian in that the pronoun is omitted and that sentence 9 *a*) sounds more acceptable in speech than 9 *b*), though both of them can equally be used in any situation encoding the intended meaning. The fact that both chiShona and Italian permit the pronoun to be unrealized

certainly classifies the language into the pro-drop group of languages. However, the difference between chiShona and Italian is that for Italian, the existence of the pronoun makes the sentence ungrammatical whereas in chiShona it remains a grammatical option.

#### *Violation of the \*[that-trace] Effect*

Violation of the \*that-trace effect refers to a situation where, in a sentence, we cannot extract an NP that immediately follows a complementizer. Non-pro-drop languages are only able to extract the subject if the complementizer is omitted, as shown in 10 *c*) below.

- 10 a) Mary believes that John bought a house  
 b) \*Who does Mary believe that bought a house  
 c) Who does Mary believe bought a house?

Sentence 10 *b*) above is ungrammatical because an NP that immediately follows a complementizer has been extracted. Example 10 *c*) is grammatical because the complementizer has been omitted. In Italian, and typical of other pro-drop languages, the subject that immediately comes after the complementizer can be extracted as shown below:

- 11) Chi, credi [che, partial]  
 ‘Who do you think [that] will come.’  
 (Chomsky, 1981, p. 241)

The Italian example shows that we can extract the NP that immediately comes after the complementizer and still the sentence remains grammatical. *Che* (that) is the complementizer and the question word *chi* (who) refers to the NP that has been extracted from the post-complementizer position.

Analysis of the chiShona language has shown that just like Italian, it also violates the \*that-trace filter. The chiShona examples below show that constituent questions permit extraction of the NP that immediately follows the complementizer.

- 12 a) Simba a -no-ziv -a kuti Peter a-teng-a imba  
 la/name 1aSM-TNS-know-TV that la/name 1aSM-buy-TV 9house  
 ‘Simba knows that Peter bought a house.’  
 b) Simba a-no-ziv-a kuti ndi-ani a -teng- a imba?  
 la/name 1aSM-TNS-know-TV that COP-who 1aSM-buy-TV 9house  
 Simba knows that who bought a house? (LIT)  
 ‘Who does Simba know that PRO bought a house?’  
 c) Simba a-no-ziv- a kuti a-teng-a imba ndi-ani?  
 la/name 1aSM-TNS-know-TV that 1aSM buy-TV 9house COP-who  
 Simba knows that bought a house is who? (LIT)  
 ‘Does Simba know who bought a house?’

- d) Ndi-ani wa-a-no-ziv- a Simba kuti a-teng-a imba?  
 COP-who 1aSM-1OM-TNS-know-TV 1a/name that  
 1aSM buy-TV 9house  
 ‘Who is that whom Simba knows bought a house?’

Example 12 c) shows that in chiShona, the subject that immediately follows the complementizer can be extracted. However, unlike other pro-drop languages, chiShona has various positions that the wh-word can occupy as shown in the examples 12 b, c) and d). These sentences all have the same underlying meaning, that of asking about an individual who bought a house and is known to Simba.

#### *Empty Resumptive Pronoun in Embedded clauses*

If we look at the English language, we see that the resumptive pronoun cannot be omitted as shown below. The empty resumptive pronoun is presented as [e].

- 13 a) \*Another property of the pro-drop parameter [which we want to see if [e] is present in chiShona ...]  
 b) Another property of the pro-drop parameter [which we want to see if it is present in chiShona....]

Example 13 b) above is not outstanding, but it is better than 13 a) because of the presence of the resumptive pronoun ‘it’. Now we can check if the resumptive pronoun can be omitted in chiShona. Apparently, just like Italian, in chiShona we can also have an empty resumptive pronoun in this construction.

- 14 a) Uyu ndi- ye mwana [wa-ndi-si-nga-fung-ir-e [a-no-fung-a[kuti iye a-nga-pas-a]]  
 This COP-her 1child [1SM-lsg-NEG-MD-think-APPL-TV [1SM-TNS-think-TV that PRO 1SM-MD-pass-TV]]  
 ‘This is the child whom I do not think s/he thinks that s/he might pass.’  
 b) Uyu ndi- ye mwana [wa-ndi-si-nga-fung-ir-e [a-no-fung-a[kuti [e] a-nga-pas -a]]  
 This COP-her 1child [1SM-lsg-NEG-MD-think APPL-TV [1SM-TNS-think-TV that 1SM-MD-pass-TV]]  
 ‘This is the child whom I do not think she thinks that she might pass.’

Just like in Italian, in example 14 b), the resumptive pronoun which refers to the head noun *mwana* (child) is absent, and the sentence remains grammatical in as much as the one in which the resumptive pronoun *iye* (s/he) is present as in 14 a). This is so unlike the English example 13, where the sentence becomes ungrammatical because the resumptive pronoun ‘it’ which should refer to the head noun has been omitted.

#### *Long ‘wh-movement’ of Subject*

Pro-drop languages allow long movement of the subject in wh-questions. This property only differs from the violation of the \*that-trace effect in that movement of the subject in the \*that-trace sentence crosses one clause boundary but in this case long wh-movement crosses more than one

clause boundary. For this property, consider the Italian example below:

- 15) L’uomo<sub>i</sub> [che mi domando[chi<sub>i</sub>abbia visto]]  
 ‘The man x such that I wonder who x saw.’

(Chomsky, 1981, p. 241)

The wh-word *chi*, which represents the subject in the above example, may undergo long movement, crossing two sentence boundaries, with the sentence remaining grammatical and there is no resumptive pronoun. Similarly, the wh-word that represents the subject in chiShona can also undergo long movement.

- 16 a) Mu-sikana [wa-a-no-ziv-a John [kuti Mary a-ka-t-i [t<sub>i</sub> a-ka-on-a Chipo a-chi-dy-a Sadza]]  
 Cls1-girl [1SM-1OM-ASP-know-TV 1a/name [that 1a/name 1SM-PST-say-TV [1SM-PST-see-TV 1a/name 1SM-MD-eat-TV 5/sadza]]]  
 ‘The girl x whom John knows that Mary said that t<sub>i</sub> saw Chipo eating sadza.’  
 b) Ndi- ani [wa-a-no-ziv-a John [kuti Mary a-ka-t-i [t<sub>i</sub> a-ka-on-a Chipo a-chi-dy-a Sadza?]]]  
 COP-who [1SM-1OM-ASP-know-TV 1a/name [that 1a/name 1SM-PST-say-TV [1SM-PST-see-TV 1a/name 1SM-MD-eat-TV 5/sadza]]]  
 ‘Who is x whom John knows that Mary said that t<sub>i</sub> saw Chipo eating sadza?’  
 c) [Wa-a-no-ziv-a John [kuti Mary a-ka-t-i [t<sub>i</sub> a-ka-on-a Chipo a-chi-dy-a Sadza ndi- ani?]]]  
 [1SM-1OM-ASP-know-TV 1a/name [that 1a/name 1SM-PST-say-TV [1SM-PST-see-TV 1a/name 1SM-MD-eat-TV 5/sadza COP-who]]]  
 ‘Who is she whom John knows that Mary said that t<sub>i</sub> saw Chipo eating sadza?’

In some instances, the wh-word in chiShona goes further to the end of the sentence, retaining the same meaning that it would have if it stayed *in situ* as shown in sentences 16 b), and c). The chiShona question word *ndi-ani* (who) is capable of both local and long movement and is more flexible in terms of the number of positions it can possibly occupy, without vitiating the intended meaning.

#### **Common Properties of ChiShona and Italian**

As evident in the discussion above, chiShona qualifies to be a pro-drop language just like Italian. In this section, this paper briefly describes the important common properties of these languages which enable them to have the pro-drop parameter.

The most important thing about these two languages is that they have a rich inflectional system, as compared to non-pro-drop languages like English. As Haegeman (1994, p. 24) points out, “when the verb inflection is rich in a language, we can recover the subject by virtue of inflection.” In such languages, inflections on the verb will usually mark agreement with the subject NP. Syntactic information like person, number and class of the subject will be shown in the inflections. So, in such cases, we can

afford to drop the subject NP since most or all the information about it can be recovered from the inflection.

In trying to account for such languages, Chomsky (1981, p. 241) proposed a basic core structure for languages with rich inflection. The structure is shown below.

S → NP INFL VP where INFL = [ ± Tense] (AGR)] AGR=PRO

The structure above proposes that the subject NP is followed by an inflected verb. As shown above, the inflections are tense markers and agreement markers. More so, as shown, it is the agreement marker which is responsible for the pro-drop parameter (AGR=PRO). Let us consider the chiShona example below for an empirical application of the structure.

17) Vana va -ka -rov -a imbwa  
2children 2SM-PST beat TV 9dog  
'The children beat the dog'

From the above example, we see agreement between the subject *vana* (children) and the corresponding subject marker *va-*. This subject marker/agreement marker encodes the information that the subject is in class 2, the plural form of class 1 [+human] nouns according to Bantu noun classification system. Thus, with such information in the subject marker (SM), pro-drop languages, chiShona being one, would be in a position to drop the subject whose features are retrievable from the marker.

If we also look at the present tense paradigms for the verb inflections for the two pro-drop languages explored in this work we see that they differ from English, as shown in Table 1 (after Haegeman, 1994, p. 24).

In the case of Italian, every number/person combination has a different ending. The inflectional paradigm distinguishes all six person and number combinations uniquely, unlike in the case of the English system, where there is only one distinctive form (the 3sg). All the other number and person forms are morphologically unmarked. Thus in Italian, there is no possibility of confusion. The ending of the verb immediately identifies the subject or its key features even if the subject is omitted. For example:

18) Parli  
(You speak)

**Table 1.** Agreement markers

	ENGLISH	CHISHONA	ITALIAN
1 sg	I speak	Ini <i>ndinotaura</i>	lo <i>parlo</i>
2 sg	You speak	Iwe <i>unotaura</i>	tu <i>parii</i>
3 sg	She speaks	Iye <i>anotaura</i>	lei <i>parla</i>
1 pl	We speak	Isu <i>tinotaura</i>	noi <i>parliamo</i>
2 pl	You speak	Imi <i>munotaura</i>	voi <i>Parlate</i>
3 pl	They speak	Ivo <i>vanotaura</i>	loro <i>Parlano</i>

As for chiShona, Table 1 also shows that it behaves similarly to Italian. Every number/person has a different inflection. Thus all six persons (plus the other noun classes, not shown) are distinguished. The subject marker helps recover information about the subject. Consider example 19 below:

19) Ndi -no -taur -a na -baba  
1SM-TNS- speak-TV with-father  
'I speak with father.'

In example 19 above, although the subject is absent the sentence remains grammatical because of the inflection *ndi-* that encodes significant information about the subject. It indicates that the subject is first person singular. So in brief, the discussion in this section has proposed that chiShona and Italian are similar in that they have a rich inflectional system which enables subjects to be unrealized, unlike in languages like English where there is poor inflection.

### Conclusion

A number of phenomena associated with the pro-drop parameter were investigated, some of which were shown to be relevant to chiShona, whilst others were shown not to be. Although chiShona qualifies to be a pro-drop language, we saw that it does not behave exactly like Italian. For example, unlike Italian which requires an obligatory omission of the topic-linked subject, the chiShona language does not obligatorily omit the topic-linked subject.

What this suggests is that other phenomena associated with the pro-drop parameter need not necessarily be considered inalienable properties of the parameter. ChiShona has its own idiosyncratic properties that differ from Italian, for instance we argued that the *wh*-word can freely occupy the position immediately after the complementizer and also the *zpost* sentential position without disturbing the original semantics of questioning. The *wh*-word in chiShona can even be moved to the end of the sentence as exhibited by the data provided. In terms of subject omission in weather verbs, the existence of the subject pronoun in Italian makes the sentence ungrammatical whereas in chiShona both options are grammatical. Thus the subject or its pronoun maybe deleted or maintained without any grammatical problems.

Although this paper did not address itself to proposing theories to account for the pro-drop parameter, it followed largely the Chomskyan Government and Binding theory and its successor, the Minimalist Program. Taking into account the unavailability of literature on the pro-drop phenomenon in chiShona, this paper has been both exploratory and explanatory in nature. However, further research in this domain in the Bantu family of languages, chiShona in particular, may throw more light on this and related phenomena.

### List of abbreviations

1pl First person plural  
1sg First person singular

2pl	Second person plural
2sg	Second person singular
3pl	Third person plural
3sg	Third person singular
AGR	Agreement marker
ASP	Aspectual marker
Cls	Noun class
COP	Copulative prefix
INFL	Inflection
MD	Mood
NEG	Negative marker
NP	Noun Phrase
OM	Object Marking
PRO	Pronoun
PST	Past tense
SM	Subject marking
TNS	Tense
TV	Terminal Vowel
VP	Verb phrase

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Victor Mugari

## Įvardžių praleidimas šonų kalboje: lyginamasis požiūris

Santrauka

Įvardžių praleidimas romanų kalbose yra plačiai įsigalėjęs. Nors bendrai tvirtinama, kad ši tendencija būdinga morfologiškai aglutinacinėms kalboms, reikia tyrinėti ir nustatyti, kaip skirtingos kalbos tvarkosi su tokia nuostata ir nustatyti, ar tos kalbos turi kokių nors specifinių išskirtinių savybių. Šiame straipsnyje analizuojama įvardžių praleidimo savybė šonų (bantų kalbų grupės kalba, vartojama Zimbabvėje) kalboje lyginant ją su gerai dokumentuota ir prototipiška italų kalba. Straipsnis yra lyginamasis ir aprašomasis, darant palyginimus su italų kalba, kuriai būdingi praleidimai, ir su anglų, kuriai jie nebūdingi. Nustatyta, kad šonų kalbai praleidimas būdingas, ir jos savybės atitinka daugumą savybių, kurias turi italų kalba. Tačiau šonų kalba turi savo išskirtinių savybių, kurios skiriasi nuo italų kalbos, pavyzdžiui, wh- žodis gali eiti po įterptinio šalutinio sakinio jungtuko ir taip pat būti sakinio gale, neiškraipant paties klausimo. Šonų kalboje wh- žodžio vieta sakinyje yra laisva ir jis gali būti po šalutinio sakinio jungtuko arba net sakinio gale. Praleidžiant veiksnių italų kalboje veiksmo reiškiamo įvardžiu buvimas daro sakinį gramatiškai neteisingą, o šonų kalboje jį galima naudoti arba nenaudoti. Mūsų tyrimai patvirtina praleidimo reiškinį kaip universalų kalbos parametą, tačiau demonstruojantį išskirtinius vidinius kalbos skirtumus.

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