

## EXTENDING THE NOTION OF CONTRAST AND THE SCOPE OF FELICITY: SPANISH NULL SUBJECTS IN CONTRASTIVE CONTEXTS\*

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**ABSTRACT.** There is debate among linguists as to whether overt subject pronouns (SPs) are pragmatically obligatory in contrastive contexts. While many authors would argue that overt SPs are necessary to maintain a pragmatically felicitous utterance (e.g. Silva-Corvalán 1994; Cameron 1995; Solomon 1999; Mayol 2010; Posio 2011), numerous researchers have challenged this view (e.g. Enríquez 1984; Schwenter 2002; Amaral & Schwenter 2005; Otheguy & Zentella 2012; Travis & Torres Cacoullos 2012). The current study explores these contexts in further detail using spoken corpus data from Mexican Spanish. Through a qualitative analysis of contrastive environments in the discourse of 20 speakers, numerous cases of contrast are analyzed in terms of SP use, type of contrast conveyed, and pragmatic (in)felicity. The data demonstrate that there are several contrastive contexts that permit the use of null SPs, further corroborating previous studies. Furthermore, the analysis moves beyond existing research by revealing additional contrastive contexts not here-to-fore discussed in the literature (to my knowledge), which engender the establishment of new types of contrast, a broadening of the notion of contrast, and an extension of the scope of pragmatic felicity.

**Keywords:** felicity; pragmatics; subject pronouns; contrast; corpus linguistics

**RESUMEN.** Existe un debate entre los lingüistas sobre si los sujetos pronominales (SP) explícitos son pragmáticamente obligatorios en contextos contrastivos. Si bien muchos autores argumentarían que los SP explícitos son necesarios para mantener una expresión pragmáticamente feliz (ej. Silva-Corvalán 1994; Cameron 1995; Solomon 1999; Mayol 2010; Posio 2011), numerosos investigadores han cuestionado este punto de vista (ej. Enríquez 1984; Schwenter 2002; Amaral & Schwenter 2005; Otheguy & Zentella 2012; Travis & Torres Cacoullos 2012). El presente estudio explora estos contextos con mayor detalle utilizando datos orales de corpus del español mexicano. A través de un análisis cualitativo de entornos contrastivos en el discurso de 20 hablantes, se analizan numerosos casos de contraste en términos del uso de los SP, tipo de contraste transmitido y (in)felicidad pragmática. Los datos demuestran que existen varios contextos contrastivos que permiten el uso de los SP nulos, lo que corrobora estudios previos. Además, el análisis va más allá de la investigación existente al revelar contextos contrastivos adicionales no discutidos hasta ahora en la literatura (a mi saber y entender), que engendran el establecimiento de nuevos tipos de

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\* This article is a derivation and expansion of Chapter 4 of my doctoral dissertation, which was completed at the University of Georgia and received funding from the University of Georgia Graduate School and the Willson Center for Humanities & Arts. I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their useful feedback on an earlier version of this paper as well as Antonio Fábregas for his assistance.

contraste, una ampliación de la noción de contraste y una extensión del rango de la felicidad pragmática.

**Palabras clave:** felicidad; pragmática; sujetos pronominales; contraste; lingüística de corpus

## 1. Introduction

Countless studies have investigated both the pragmatic and sociolinguistic role of subject pronouns (SPs) in Spanish (e.g. Enríquez 1984; Gundel et al. 1993; Davidson 1996; Stewart 2003; Blackwell 1998, 2001, 2003; Quesada & Blackwell 2009; Mayol 2010; Posio 2011; Blackwell & Quesada 2012; Otheguy & Zentella 2012; Carvalho, Orozco & Shin 2015; Padilla 2021). While traditional explanations oversimplify the pragmatic role of overt SPs, attributing them mainly to contrastive or emphatic functions (e.g. Bosque & Demonte 1999; Butt & Benjamin 2004; King & Suñer 2004), ample scholarship in pragmatics and sociolinguistics both complicates these notions and extends the functions of SPs (e.g. Davidson 1996; Stewart 2003; Posio 2011; Otheguy & Zentella 2012; Travis & Torres Cacoullós 2012; Carvalho, Orozco & Shin 2015; Orozco & Hurtado 2021). For instance, cognitively oriented approaches to subject expression are prominent in the literature. The notion of cognitive attention states in discourse can explain the behavior of subject expression. The state of *in focus*, for example, is described by Gundel (1999) as a state in which the attention of the interlocutors can be assumed to be focused on a given entity or referent due to its salience in the discourse. Regarding SP usage, if the intended referent is salient and is the focus of attention at a given point in the discourse, this promotes the use of null SPs. The idea of salient or in focus referents is related to the notion of *accessibility* (e.g. Givón 1983; Ariel 1994). Referents that are the most accessible in the listener's mind are also those that are most salient and are thus likely to be marked with less coding material (in this case, null SPs) whereas less accessible and less salient referents will more likely be marked with more coding material (in this case, overt SPs) (Givón 1983:18). Accessibility is discussed in terms of distance, whereby shorter distances between referents and their antecedents imply high accessibility while longer distances imply low accessibility (Ariel 1994). Additionally, the prominence of antecedents plays a role in accessibility. According to Ariel (1994), more prominent antecedents such as subjects, topics, and humans are more accessible than non-subjects, non-topics, and non-humans. Thus, more accessible and salient referents favor null SPs since they were recently mentioned, are more prominent, and are in focus. More recently, researchers have argued that null SPs can be used to convey objectivity while expressed subjects focalize the speaker's presence and indicate more subjective and argumentative roles (Aijón Oliva & Serrano 2010). Furthermore, and similar to the above-cited ideas of accessibility and cognitive attention states, the notions of *prominence* and *informativity* are highlighted whereby more prominent or cognitively activated antecedents favor null subjects whereas overt subjects are produced in contexts of greater informativity (or *focalization*) that lack or have less previous context from which to deduce their referents (Aijón Oliva & Serrano 2010; Aijón Oliva 2017).

Regarding contrast, some argue that contrastive contexts are in fact rare in naturally occurring speech, thus accounting little for the uses and functions of SPs (e.g. Posio 2011;

Travis & Torres Cacoullós 2012). The current paper focuses on the pragmatics of SPs, particularly in relation to felicity and the notion of contrast. There is debate among linguists as to whether overt SPs are obligatory. While many authors would argue that overt SPs are pragmatically obligatory in contrastive contexts (e.g. Silva-Corvalán 1994; Cameron 1995; Solomon 1999; Mayol 2010; Posio 2011), numerous researchers have challenged this view (e.g. Enríquez 1984; Schwenter 2002; Amaral & Schwenter 2005; Otheguy & Zentella 2012; Travis & Torres Cacoullós 2012). For example, Amaral & Schwenter (2005) argue that the use of certain adverbials (e.g. *aquí* ‘here’, *por mi parte* ‘as for me’, *honestamente* ‘honestly’, etc.) can alternatively aid in carrying out such contrastive functions without the need of an overt SP (see Section 2 for a detailed discussion).

The goal of this paper is to further explore contrastive contexts using spoken corpus data from Mexican Spanish. Through a qualitative analysis, it will be further corroborated that overt SPs are in fact not obligatory as evidenced by several examples of null SPs in contexts of contrast, lending support to previous research (Schwenter 2002; Amaral & Schwenter 2005; Otheguy & Zentella 2012; Travis & Torres Cacoullós 2012; Travis & Torres Cacoullós 2018). Moreover, the current analysis will contribute to the pragmatic discussion of SPs by moving beyond current explanations, in particular by extending Amaral and Schwenter’s (2005) analysis and demonstrating that adverbials are likewise unnecessary, thus expanding on the possible environments where null SPs can occur in contrastive contexts while maintaining pragmatic felicity. Finally, and from a more general perspective, the notion of what constitutes a contrastive context in relation to SP usage will be broadened and revised through the establishment of additional categories. Specifically, it will be argued that our current notions of contrast are too narrow and do not capture all contrastive contexts in naturally occurring speech.

## 2. Contrastive Contexts

The notion of contrast in relation to SP use has been viewed in different ways. Traditionally, contrastiveness is created in a context in which two (or more) subjects are compared/contrasted in discourse, as in the following constructed example:

- (1) *Él tiene dieciocho años y yo tengo veinticinco años*  
‘He is eighteen years old and I am twenty-five years old’.

This contrast can either be explicit or implicit and is described by Enríquez (1984) as a context in which the speaker intentionally counterposes the subject to one or more people for reasons of opposition, confirmation, or to adopt a different position. The following examples from Enríquez (1984:115, emphasis mine) demonstrate contrastive contexts, particularly when certain entities of the contrast set are implied and not explicitly stated in the utterance itself:

- (2) *Yo vengo solo [los demás no sé]*  
‘I come alone [the others I don’t know]’

- (3) *Él no se atreve a opinar [pero su hermano siempre]*  
 ‘He doesn’t dare opine [but his brother always does]’

In (2) and (3), respectively, *Yo* ‘I’ is expressed as being in opposition to *los demás* ‘the others’, and *Él* ‘he’ is in opposition to *su hermano* ‘his brother’. Essentially, the speaker is differentiating the subject from other referents or making a comparison between two (or more) people in some way.

Other researchers offer a more fine-grained perspective on contrast. For instance, Mayol (2010) establishes a three-way distinction between different types of contrast. The first is *double contrast* and is the explicit type of contrast where both subject referents are mentioned. More specifically, the verb phrases of each subject “predicate two different, and in some sense opposite, actions or states” (Mayol 2010:2499). Furthermore, it is explicitly indicated whether or not the entities involved carry out the actions mentioned. An example from Catalan that effectively illustrates double contrast, adopted from Mayol (2010:2500), is shown below where the speaker uses “antonym predicates” (Mayol 2010:2499): *go* (sailing) vs. *stay*. Essentially, different subjects are performing different actions.

- (4) *Ara nosaltres anirem a navegar per l’aigua i tu et quedaràs aquí sola.*  
 ‘Now **we** will go sailing in the water and **you** will stay here on your own.’

Unlike double contrast, the remaining two types of contrast identified by Mayol (2010) are not explicit but implied from the context: *implicit contrast* and *weak contrast*. Implicit contrast is when the antecedent of an overt SP is contrasted with a highly salient entity in the surrounding discourse. Example (5) from Mayol (2010:2501) involves a story featuring a big frog and a small frog. The small frog is explicitly mentioned in the example (*ranita, ella*), and, due to the high salience of the big frog in the previous discourse, it is implied that the big frog did not want to be friends with the small frog (although not explicitly stated). *Ella* (the small frog) *quería que las dos fueran amigas* [implied: the big frog, in contrast, did not want this].

- (5) *La ranita se pone a llorar porque Ø se ha hecho daño y además ella quería que las dos fueran amigas.*  
 ‘The little frog starts crying because she has hurt herself and, moreover, **she** wanted that they should be friends’.

The final type is what Mayol (2010) calls *weak contrast*. In this context, and unlike the other two contrast types discussed above, the speaker does not actually convey a definite opposition between subject referents but does leave open the possibility of a contrast between the antecedent of the overt SP and some other entity in the context. That is, “the speaker is only making a claim about the referent of the OSP [overt SP] and leaves it open whether this claim should or should not apply to the other referents relevant in the discourse” (Mayol 2010:2502). Weak contrast is illustrated with phrases such as *creo yo* or *digo yo* in which the speaker is emphasizing that this is something they think or believe, but that others may or may not believe. No explicit mention of such other people is made,

and no claim is made either way as to whether they believe or do not believe, but it can be inferred from the context that there is a type of contrast, albeit subtle or “weak”. An example from Stewart (2003), cited in Mayol (2010:2502), that illustrates weak contrast is the following:

- (6) *Entonces cuando por la mañana sabes que se convoca una manifestación de estudiantes o, vamos, una cosa similar, pues te informas un poco del tema. Vamos yo por lo menos pues miro si ha pasado en días anteriores.*  
‘So when one morning you know that a student demonstration is to be held, or, well something like that, well, you find out a bit about the issue. Well, at least I, well, look if it has happened on previous days.’

The speaker, a journalist, is generalizing with the impersonal *tú*, but then switches to *yo* to clarify that she herself at least does the action (*mirar*), but that other journalists may or may not. Again, no claim is made as to whether others find out a bit about the issue or do not, but the speaker does claim that she does, thereby contrasting herself.<sup>1</sup>

The above examples are all cases of contrast where an overt SP is present. Nonetheless, as stated in the Introduction, it has been shown that overt SPs are not always present, are not obligatory, and that adverbials can aid in carrying out a contrastive function in lieu of the overt SP. In their analysis of spoken corpus data, Amaral and Schwenter (2005) point out that adverbials such as *aquí* ‘here’, *por mi parte* ‘as for me’, *honestamente* ‘honestly’, and *personalmente* ‘personally’, among others, that co-occur with null SPs can serve to express a contrast between subject referents that would otherwise be conveyed by an overt SP. Consider (7) below. Here, *por mi parte* is used to indirectly express contrast between the speaker and their parents.

- (7) *Mis padres veranean en la playa. Por mi parte, Ø prefiero ir a la montaña*  
‘My parents spend the summer in the beach. As for me, (I) prefer to go to the mountain’ (p. 121)

As can be seen in this utterance, an overt SP is absent and unnecessary. To take another example, the use of *honestamente* can achieve a similar type of contrast. In this case, the speaker uses first-person plural verbal morphology, which indicates that the contrast is between “us” (*preferimos*) and Ana’s friends. Again, notice the use of the null, not the overt SP.

- (8) *Los amigos de Ana siempre llegan tarde a las fiestas. Honestamente, Ø preferimos llegar temprano.*  
‘Ana’s friends always arrive late at parties. Honestly, (we) prefer to arrive early’ (p. 123).

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<sup>1</sup> See also Paredes Silva (1993), who uses criteria for establishing what constitutes contrastive contexts such as affirmative vs. negative polarity and the use of the same verb with different complements; Givón’s (2001:233) lexical conception of contrast via “contrastive quantifiers” (e.g. *sólo*, *sí*, *mismo*); and Bentivoglio’s (1987) focus on connectives (e.g. *pero*, *sin embargo*).

Therefore, Amaral and Schwenter's (2005) analysis demonstrates that it is not always the case that speakers convey contrast using overt SPs.

The following section will present several examples from the current corpus data that illustrate the different types of contrast discussed in this section and, crucially, will provide further evidence, with data similar to those of Amaral and Schwenter (2005), that overt SPs are not always present and are thus not obligatory. Moreover, we will see that the scope of pragmatic felicity in contrastive environments is extended such that there are a number of examples of contrast not only with absence of overt SPs, but also absence of adverbials like those shown above.

### 3. The Data

The data presented below were extracted from the *Corpus of Spanish in Georgia* (Limerick 2022), a collection of sociolinguistic interviews conducted in 2015 with members of the Latinx immigrant community in the Atlanta metropolitan area (See Limerick 2018 for further details). The current sample comprises Mexicans from various regions of Mexico, 12 females and 8 males, with ages ranging from 25 to 60. Additionally, their lengths of residency (LOR) in the U.S. range from 2 to 25 years (average = 12), and their ages of arrival (AOAs) range from 11 to 56 (average = 27).<sup>2</sup>

As an initial illustration of a contrastive context from the current data, (9) below shows how the speaker distinguishes herself from her husband by stating that she stayed in Mexico while her husband travelled to the United States. In line with the accounts of traditional grammarians and some modern linguists, this speaker follows the pattern of using the overt SP *yo* 'I'.

- (9) *mi esposo tuvo que viajar a Estados Unidos, estuvo aquí, mucho tiempo, yo me quedé allá, en México* [F52]<sup>3</sup>  
 'my husband had to travel to the United States, he was here, for a long time, I stayed there, in Mexico'

However, although contrastive contexts certainly show a preference for overt SPs in the current data, there are still plenty of cases in which null pronouns can be observed.<sup>4</sup> In examples (10), (12), (14), and (15) below, the pronouns are null despite the contrast. Consistent with the analysis of Amaral and Schwenter (2005), we can see that, instead of overt pronouns indicating the contrast, the adverbials *en lo personal* 'personally', *en mi caso* 'in my case', *acá* 'here', and *en México* 'in Mexico' function in a contrastive manner. In (10) the speaker is distinguishing herself from others by indicating that, in contrast to people that go to church frequently, she is not religious. Her use of the adverbial *en lo personal* highlights this contrast (compare with the overt variant in 11).

<sup>2</sup> For a variationist sociolinguistic/language contact analysis of SPs on this speaker sample, see Limerick (2019).

<sup>3</sup> Speaker codes indicate sex and age.

<sup>4</sup> 40 out of 107 (37%) cases of contrast were null.

- (10) *Bueno, en lo personal, Ø no soy muy religiosa pero...por lo que veo, la gente sí va bastante a la iglesia, aquí.* [F30Mex]  
'Well, personally, I'm not very religious but...from what I see, people do go quite a bit to church, here'
- (11) *nada más nos este, dedicamos, de lo que, bueno yo en lo personal, me dedico a lo, lo que es...* [F49Mex]  
'We just uh, are devoted to, of what is, well I personally, am devoted to what, what is....'

In (12) the speaker is indicating contrast with *en mi caso*, saying that at least in her case, there were not many job opportunities and that she worked (perhaps unlike others) cleaning houses (compare with the overt variant in 13).

- (12) *cuando uno en su posición de inmigrante, llega a este país pues realmente, eh, buscas las oportunidades y, realmente no son muchas, eh, al menos en mi caso, Ø trabajé de, desde limpiando casas* [F32Mex]  
'when one in their position as an immigrant, arrives to this country well really, uh, you look for opportunities and, there really aren't many, uh, a least in my case, I worked from, from cleaning houses'
- (13) *todos nos catalogan como delincuentes, que venimos, a quitar el trabajo de, de de, pues de los que son nacionalizados aquí, de, de los que tienen más derechos porque es su país, entonces, yo en mi caso, yo no digo que vengo a, a quitarles un trabajo, yo estoy aquí porque...* [F60Mex]  
'everyone categorizes us as criminals, that we come, to take the job from, from from, well from those who are nationals here, from, from those who have more rights because it's their country, so, I in my case, I'm not saying that I'm coming to, to take away a job from them, I'm here because...'

Further, (14) illustrates a comparison between Mexico (*allá*) and Georgia (*acá*) whereby the speaker is making a contrast between having to pay to park due to lack of space in Mexico and not having such a problem in Georgia. The locative adverbial *acá* (and not *nosotros*) serves to indicate this contrast.

- (14) *allá hay que pagar para estacionarse porque nunca hay espacio, y acá pues, Ø todavía no tenemos ese problema.* [F32Mex]  
'there one has to pay to park because there's never space, and here well, we don't have that problem yet'

Likewise, a locative adverbial is seen in (15) (*en México*) and a comparison between places is made. Here the speaker indicates a contrast by stating that in Mexico they do not have the habit of exercising like people do in Georgia. As in (14), the overt *nosotros* is not used to signal the contrast. Compare with the overt variant in (16).

- (15) *Por ejemplo en México*  $\emptyset$  *no tenemos la costumbre de hacer ejercicio, y yo eso lo noto en, en la gente de acá* [F32Mex]  
 ‘For example in Mexico we don’t have the habit of exercising, and I notice that in, in people from here’
- (16) *cuando me encuentro, a un americano, tienen esa hermosa costumbre, de saludarte, nosotros en México no tenemos esa bonita costumbre* [F32Mex]  
 ‘when I encounter, an American, they have that nice habit, of greeting you, we in Mexico don’t have that nice habit’

Thus, the above examples illustrate that overt SPs are not categorical (nor obligatory) in contrastive contexts, at least not in the current data. They also corroborate Amaral and Schwenter’s (2005) data showing the contrastive use of adverbials as well as their argument that “it is inaccurate to say that SPPs are obligatory in contrastive contexts” (p. 125).

### 3.1 *The absence of both overt SPs and adverbials*

Interestingly, numerous cases of contrast were also found in the current data with neither the presence of adverbials nor overt SPs, a pattern that, to the best of my knowledge, has not been discussed explicitly in previous research. In fact, Amaral and Schwenter (2005) argue that expressions like adverbials are *necessary* in contrastive contexts if the SP is null in order to maintain pragmatic felicity. However, we maintain here that this need not be the case as we see in the examples below (17, 18, 20-27) where both overt SPs and adverbial expressions are absent.<sup>5</sup>

#### 3.1.1 *‘Pseudo-double contrast’*

The first category of contrastive contexts is what I call ‘pseudo-double contrast’, which is a type of explicit contrast. These do not fall into the traditional notions of explicit contrast, nor the previously discussed concept by Mayol (2010) since their structure is not as fixed. In particular, they do not always contain two referents as syntactic subjects, and they do not employ opposite verbal semantics. They do, nonetheless, contain two explicit and opposing referents. This opposition is typically indicated by negation (e.g. *no* ‘no’, *tampoco* ‘neither’).

In (17) the speaker is saying that people in Roswell (*[nosotros] somos* ‘[we] are’) do not have many celebrations throughout the year, making a contrast with Chinese culture (conveying the contrast with negation + the verb *ser* + the conjunction *como*). In terms of subject expression and adverbials, notice that the overt SP *nosotros* is absent and that there are also no contrastive adverbials (e.g. *aquí, por nuestra parte, personalmente*, etc.).

- (17) *tal vez, la otra actividad más importante sería, el, conmemorar el ... las fiestas de diciembre, tal vez sea, este el nacimiento de Jesús o el año nuevo allí...  $\emptyset$  no somos*

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<sup>5</sup> Although similar examples are attested and presented in works such as Travis and Torres Cacoullós (2012), Otheguy & Zentella (2012), and Torres Cacoullós & Travis (2018), there is no explicit discussion of these particular examples by the authors with regard to the (non) presence of adverbials in particular.



*como los, tal vez la cultura china que tiene más actividades en todo el transcurso del año según la religión...* [M34Mex]

‘perhaps, the other most important activity would be, the, commemorating the ... the December holidays, perhaps it’s, uh the birth of Jesus or the new year or something...we aren’t like the, perhaps the Chinese culture which has more activities throughout the course of the year according to the religion...’

Further, both elements are absent in (18) in which the speaker is distinguishing herself (with negation) from others (*las personas*) who think a certain way (also compare with the overt variant in 19 which presents a remarkably similar contrastive context in terms of overall meaning).

(18) *No soy egoísta pero tampoco Ø soy de las personas que, que este, que piense que hay que dejar todo lo que uno tiene* [F49Mex]

‘I’m not selfish but I’m also not like people that, that uh, that think that one has to leave everything that one has’

(19) *pues no, no este, yo no soy de las personas que, que les diga a los demás “deja tus cosas y vente para acá”* [F49Mex]

‘well no, no uh, I’m not like people that, that say to everyone else “leave your things and come here”

In (20) below, the speaker makes a contrast between herself (and those she grew up with), who did not grow up with a certain type of education, and people (*la gente*) that did grow up this way. But notice that she does not use an overt SP with either verb (*crecimos* nor *tiene*) to make this distinction nor does she employ adverbial phrases to do so.

(20) *eh, quizás porque Ø no crecimos, así, con ese nivel de educación porque yo creo que la gente que hace eso es porque Ø tiene educación* [F32Mex]

‘uh, maybe because we didn’t grow up, like that, with that level of education because I think that people that do that it’s because they have education’

### 3.1.2 ‘Single Contrast’

Another type of contrast observed in the current data, a type of implied contrast, is what I call ‘single-contrast’. This involves the mention of only one explicit entity (as opposed to two) whereas the other entity is only inferred. That is, there is one subject and antecedent, but no other noun phrase or pronoun referring to a specific contrasting entity (unlike those in the previous section). Moreover, they may or may not contain opposite verbal/object/complement semantics, but there are various types of explicit or implicit contrastive markers (e.g. *en lugar de, creyente* vs. *ir regularmente*). Example (21) below demonstrates a case in which the speaker explains that instead of playing ball (marking contrast with the prepositional phrase *en lugar de*), “*estábamos trabajando*” (we were working). Here the contrast is made between other kids her age (who were playing) and the speaker (who was working). The other kids are never mentioned explicitly, but it is

inferred that the speaker is contrasting her childhood experience of working with the typical, more expected child activity of playing. Here we do have “antonym predicates” (Mayol 2010): *trabajando* vs. *jugando*. There is not an overt SP, nor is there an adverbial expression to indicate the contrast of the first-person plural subject.

- (21) *yo creo que a los seis años en lugar de estar jugando una pelota ∅ estábamos, trabajando para ganar un poco de dinero [M34Mex]*  
 ‘I think at six years old instead of playing with a ball we were, working to make a little bit of money’

To take another illustration, (example 22 below) the speaker initially uses overt *yo* when differentiating himself from others who may not be Catholic, then switches to null SPs for the subsequent two clauses (and without adverbials). These latter clauses are still in the contrastive environment as he continues to distinguish himself, indicating that he is simply a believer (*soy creyente*) but is not one (*no soy*) who regularly attends church (as others do). Thus, we have the explicit subject referent (the speaker), but no explicit opposing referent. The listener merely infers the latter as something to the effect of “people who regularly attend church”.

- (22) *Mira, yo soy católico, bueno, creer ∅ soy creyente... católico... ∅ no soy... de que ir a, ir a las iglesias todas las... los domingos [M52Mex]*  
 ‘Look, I’m Catholic, well, believe I’m a...Catholic...believer...I’m not...one to go to, go to churches every...Sunday’

### 3.1.3 Implicit contrast, double contrast, and weak contrast

While less frequent, there were some examples that are in line with Mayol’s (2010) categories of implicit, double, and weak contrast.<sup>6</sup> Example 23 below falls into Mayol’s (2010) category of *implicit contrast* in that the opposing referent (the son) to the antecedent of the subject (the speaker) is highly salient in the discourse context. In the following excerpt, a woman is highlighting differences between the way she is raising her son and the way she was raised. She begins with several overt SPs and then switches to nulls while continuing to contrast herself and the things she was able to do (*∅ podía*) with, implicitly, what her son is allowed to do. This is not stated explicitly (e.g. *podía salir con amigos, pero él no puede* ‘[I] could go out with friends, but he cannot’), but implicitly since her son is salient in the context.

- (23) *yo estoy educando a mi hijo de una forma muy diferente que me educaron a mí, [...] yo jamás, jamás le diría “sal a la calle” @ “y regresa”, no, no there's no way, y yo, era libre ∅ podía salir al parque, ∅ podía salir eh con mis amigos, ∅ podía andar en bicicleta, este aparte eran otras épocas...y, en los noventa, yo soy de lo-nací en ochenta... [F34Mex]*

<sup>6</sup> I am referring here specifically to examples involving the absence of both overt SPs and adverbials. There were numerous cases of implicit and double contrast in the dataset overall.

‘I’m raising my son in a very different way than they raised me, [...] I never, never would say to him “go outside” @ “and come back”, no, no there’s no way, and I, was free I could go out to the park, I could go out uh with my friends, I could ride bikes, uh also they were different times...and, in the nineties, I’m from the-I was born in eighty...’

If the overt *yo* were obligatory, why would she not continue to use it with the numerous cases of the verb *podía*? She is clearly still making a contrast between what she was able to do as a child and what she allows her son to do.<sup>7</sup>

In addition, the speaker in (24) makes a distinction between her positive experience in Roswell to, implicitly, that of others in Cumming. She uses a mix of overt and null first-person singular SPs to convey her experience in Roswell, and we also see two locative phrases that give us a broader context regarding the differential experience in the two places: *esta ciudad* at the beginning of her speech turn and *en Cumming* near the end.

- (24) *yo tengo un buen concepto de esta ciudad, me gusta Ø me siento cómoda Ø no me siento discriminada Ø no me siento rechazada por mi color de piel, por el, por el idioma que yo hablo, eh, la policía hasta ahorita el... el contacto desde que te miran, se me hac-, se me ha hecho, este cortés, y eso era algo que en Cumming, no se ve.* [F32Mex]

I have a good view of this city, I like it I feel comfortable I don’t feel discriminated against I don’t feel rejected because of my skin color, due to, due to the language I speak, uh, the police so far the...contact as to when they look at you, it’s- it’s been, uh polite, and that was something that in Cumming, you don’t see’

She is explaining that, in contrast to the city of Cumming, in Roswell she feels comfortable, not discriminated against due to her skin color or language, and that the police are polite. Notice again the omission of the overt SP with various instances of the verb *sentir* ‘feel’, despite the larger contrastive environment. She also uses the impersonal second-person singular pronoun in the phrase *te miran*, generalizing the experience of police interactions with minorities. In *her* case, the interactions were positive, but for people in Cumming that type of politeness from police is not something one sees. Hence, the statement *Ø me siento cómoda Ø no me siento discriminada*, etc. can be interpreted as contrastive once we consider the broader, subsequent discursive context.

Regarding double contrast, the following example (25) conveys a distinction between “us” and the majority of kids. The speaker states that she (and others) didn’t use to bring money to school like other kids did. Here we clearly have the characteristic elements of double contrast as outlined by Mayol (2010), e.g., two subject referents (*nosotros* and

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<sup>7</sup> An anonymous reviewer challenged the idea that the repeated omission of *yo* in (23) indeed conveys contrast and argued that this repetition is simply a manifestation of topic continuity. While I agree that topic continuity undoubtedly influences the use of null subjects here, I also think that, simultaneously, contrast is apparent given the larger context. Particularly, the action of going out (with the verb *salir*) is referred to multiple times, first with negation in the phrase “**jamás** le diría ‘sal a la calle’” (indicating that her son is not permitted to go out), then with two affirmative clauses “*Ø podía salir*” (now referring to the speaker, and thus contrasting the speaker with what she would allow her son to do).

*ellos*) and opposite verbal semantics in the sense that one is negated (*no traíamos*) and the other is not (*se llevan*). While there is an overt lexical subject as well as an overt SP with the verb *llevarse* ‘take with’, the speaker omits the overt SP *nosotros* and does not employ an adverbial to convey the contrast.

- (25) *Porque dinero no, Ø no traíamos en cash como para poderte gastar en lo que quisieras, no, como la mayoría de los niños, ellos, la mayoría de los niños se llevan dinero y traen para comprar...* [F43]

‘Because money, we didn’t bring it in cash so as to be able to spend it on whatever you wanted, no, like the majority of kids, they, the majority of kids take money with them and have it to buy...’

We also find cases in the corpus data where the speaker makes reference to herself, but no explicit mention of a contrasting entity, consonant with what Mayol (2010) calls *weak contrast*. We again see overt/null variation with this type of contrast, as evidenced by the excerpts below. In (26), the speaker initially uses the first-person plural form *somos* with a null subject to initiate the contrast, then self-repairs by switching to *yo* to emphasize that while others may or may not be sociable or make friends easily, she herself is not. The same speaker uses the null variant in another context of weak contrast (27) to state that she was not a very diligent or hardworking student in school (with the implication that some other students were).

- (26) *¿Qué más? pero pues Ø no somos, bueno yo no soy muy amiguera entonces, en el trabajo pues...* [F30]

‘What else? but well we aren’t, well I’m not very sociable so, at work well...’

- (27) *En la escuela, pues sí me gustaba la escuela, uhm, Ø nunca fui una niña muy aplicada pero...* [F30]

‘At school, well I did like school, um, I was never a very dedicated student but...’

The above data demonstrate, then, that contrast can be expressed felicitously in the absence of both overt SPs and adverbials, a crucial difference between the current data and those analyzed by Amaral and Schwenter (2005) (See also Otheguy & Zentella 2012; Travis & Torres Cacoullos 2012; Torres Cacoullos & Travis 2018 for similar examples).

#### 4. Conclusion

The corpus data presented throughout this paper contributes to discussions on the pragmatics of SPs in contrastive contexts in numerous regards. First, it corroborates previous accounts concerning the (non) obligatory status of overt SPs. Evidence is provided to further support that null SPs can be used felicitously in contrastive environments, both in the presence of adverbial phrases (Amaral & Schwenter 2005) and in their absence. Concerning the absence of adverbials, although previous research dealing with subject expression has illustrated such examples in passing (e.g. Otheguy & Zentella 2012), this is the first study (to my knowledge) to discuss them explicitly and systematically. Second, the current analysis provides support for previous categorizations

of different types of contrast, such as Mayol's (2010) *double*, *implicit*, and *weak contrast*, through the presentation of several examples that align with these three categories. However, additional categories are also added here to include other types of contrastive contexts not discussed by Mayol (2010) nor other researchers (e.g. Enríquez 1984; Bentivoglio 1987; Paredes Silva 1993; Givón 2001). These two contexts are what I call 'pseudo-double contrast' and 'single contrast'. 'Pseudo-double contrast' is a sub-type of 'double contrast' and is a kind of explicit contrast. The main difference is that the structure is not as fixed. Namely, it is not always the case that they contain two referents as syntactic subjects, and they also do not employ opposite verbal semantics. The second category, 'single contrast', is an indirect or implicit contrast. This context involves only one explicit entity. The opposing entity is simply inferred. They may or may not contain opposite verbal semantics/objects/complements, but there are contrastive phrases mentioned (e.g. *en lugar de*) that set apart the explicit and implicit entities. The emergence of these new categories engenders the need for our current notions of contrast to be broadened. Instead of only looking to fixed and narrow characteristics such as subjecthood, distinct verbal semantics or complements, polarity, connectives, and contrastive quantifiers (Bentivoglio 1987; Paredes Silva 1993; Givón 2001; Mayol 2010) we should consider the broader discourse context to uncover what elements the speaker may be contrasting. More specifically to SP use, these additional environments offer further support that pragmatic felicity can be maintained in contrastive contexts with null SPs, the presence of adverbials in some cases, and even without adverbials in others. Hence, the data throughout this paper show that, aside from expanding the notion of contrast itself, the scope of felicity should be extended. Furthermore, given that overt SPs are not obligatory in contrastive contexts and that not all overt SPs are contrastive, it is crucial to consider, echoing other researchers, the more cognitive role of subject expression, as connected to notions such as accessibility, prominence/informativity, and objectivity/subjectivity (e.g. Givón 1983; Ariel 1994; Aijón Oliva & Serrano 2010; Aijón Oliva 2017). This does not mean that contrast is not an important factor involved in the expression of overt SPs. As noted above, 37% of contrastive contexts were null in the current data, leaving 63% in which overt SPs were produced. Moreover, much previous work convincingly demonstrates the contrastive use of subjects (e.g. Enríquez 1984; Quesada & Blackwell 2009; Mayol 2010). Overt SPs clearly play an integral role in contrasting subject referents, but equally important are their cognitively oriented functions in discursive interactions. Moreover, the two perspectives of contrast, on one hand, and cognitive role on the other, need not be mutually exclusive. Speakers can contrast subject referents with overt SPs while simultaneously using them to enhance or promote accessibility, informativity, and subjectivity.

Regarding future research, an additional context emerges in the data, underexplored in the literature (see Torres Cacoullos & Travis 2018 for an exception), that is somewhat parallel to the above cases of contrast. The main difference is that the context referred to here (and illustrated below) involves 'sameness' with regard to actions or states of the subject referents; the referents themselves are still distinct (e.g. *yo y ella*), but their verbs, complements, or other contextual elements are the same. In other words, the two (or more) antecedents presented in the discourse are doing the same thing. Thus, we have a unique context in which the antecedents are differentiated or set apart, but the emphasis is on their

sameness. In the current data, at least from the limited cases observed, the word *también* tends to co-occur with the second subject mentioned. Consider examples (28)–(31):

- (28) *aquí como todos trabajamos te digo que la señora trabaja aquí... la esposa, y yo trabajo aquí y mi hija trabaja acá, ahorita en la casa no hay nadie...* [M52Mex]  
 ‘here like we all work I told you that the woman works here...the wife, and I work here and my daughter works here, now in the house there’s no one...’
- (29) *ellos se sienten como rechazados, en en ciertos lugares, y yo he visto que sí tienen razón, me ha tocado a mí ir a, algunas tiendas son de- no más porque lo ven, que es hispano, luego ya no lo atienden, so- no le quieren dar información, o, o le contestan de malas, a veces ni le contestan, entonces yo pienso que sí yo me he sentido así también, sí desgraciadamente pues,* [F60Mex]  
 ‘they feel like rejected, in in certain places, and I’ve seen that they are right, it’s happened to me going to, some stores they are- simply because they see you, that you’re Hispanic, so they don’t attend to you, so- they don’t want to give you information, or, or they answer you in a rude way, sometimes they don’t even answer you, so I think that I have felt that way too, yeah unfortunately well’
- (30) *yo, dije, “OK, si ellos lo hacen yo también lo puedo hacer”* [F32Mex]  
 ‘I, said, “OK, if they do it I can do it too’
- (31) *Uhm, eh, ¿qué digo? Pues Ø soy como la mayoría que llegó aquí, de veinte años y, y parece...* [F32Mex]  
 ‘Um, uh, What can I say? Well I’m like the majority who arrived here, at twenty years and, and it seems...’

The first three examples show very explicit cases of comparison between the speaker and other subject referents. These might be deemed ‘double sameness’ as we have two (or more) explicit subjects accompanied by the same verb (*trabajar*, *sentirse*, etc.). The speaker is not making a contrast but is rather conveying that she does/feels the same thing as others (*trabajar aquí*, *sentirse así*, *hacerlo*). Example (31) is the exception, where the comparison is not as direct, and the speaker uses two different verbs (*ser* vs. *llegar*). Nonetheless, she is communicating ‘sameness’ or similarity in some way to the majority of immigrants who arrived to the U.S. The other exceptional element here is the null SP. These data raise questions as to the scope of this context of ‘sameness’ as well as the (non) obligatory nature of SPs. These observations open new avenues of research that should be considered in future work. Additionally, it would be beneficial to consider dialectal variation regarding the use of SPs in contrastive contexts as it could be the case that pragmatic felicity is treated or viewed differently according to region or other social factors.

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