

3.1.3 The (Non)Antipronominality of P-Gaps

Chomsky (1982) argued that parasitic gaps are in-situ null pronominals (to a large extent on the basis of data whose acceptability he subsequently, and dramatically, changed his views about). This argument was extended by Cinque and, much more extensively, by Postal, who claim that parasitic gaps show an essentially pronominal distribution. For both Cinque and Postal, the underlying structure of parasitic gap constructions is illustrated in (17b) and (18b), where e_i is a phonetically empty resumptive pronoun (henceforth, RP):

(17) a. [Which books] $_i$ did you buy $__i$ without reading e_i ?

b. You bought [which books] $_i$ without reading e_i .

(18) a. [Which authors] $_i$ do fans of $__i$ idolize e_i fanatically?

b. Fans of [which authors] $_i$ idolize e_i fanatically.

Both authors argue that environments which systematically disallow weak definite pronouns (the environments termed *antipronominal* in Postal 1998) also prohibit parasitic gaps. However, as the more detailed examination of the relevant data by Levine et al. (2000) and Levine (2001) reveals, there are many antipronominal environments that appear to admit parasitic gaps. We offer just a few, representative examples illustrating the lack of correlation between parasitic gap and pronoun-friendly environments:⁷

(19) a. Robin wanted to paint her walls green $_i$ without, however, wanting to paint her ceiling that $_i$ /*it $_i$.

b. Green $_i$ is a color you might decide to paint your walls $__i$ without necessarily wanting to paint your ceiling e_i as well. (change of color environment)

(20) a. He claimed to be a certain kind of doctor before actually becoming one/*it.

b. [What kind of doctor] $_i$ did he CLAIM to be $__i$ before actually BECOMING e_i ? (predicate nominal)

In addition, there are many examples of parasitic gaps which occur not only in antipronominal contexts, but which are not even nominal to begin with. A few examples will have to stand in for the many cited in the sources referred to above:

⁷Judgments about such sentences are notoriously labile. Nonetheless, if even a small percentage of the data claims made by Levine et al. (2000) and Levine (2001) are correct, there is little hope of salvaging Postal's claims about antipronominal environments.

- (21) a. How harshly do you think we can treat THEM ____i without in turn being treated e_i OURSELVES? (adverbial p-gap)
- b. This is a cause [TO which] people are ATTRACTED ____i without ever becoming seriously DEVOTED e_i /*there_i. (PP p-gap)
- c. I wonder just how nasty_i you can PRETEND to be ____i without actually BECOMING e_i/*it. (AP p-gap).

Parasitic gaps, but not definite proforms are allowed in these environments, as indicated. Thus, such examples are precisely the kind of data that any contentful proposal to derive parasitic gaps from null resumptive pronouns predicts should be ill-formed.⁸ The relative ease with which good examples to the contrary can be constructed suggests again that there is no empirical basis for a difference between true and parasitic gaps along the lines proposed in Chomsky 1982, Cinque 1990, or Postal 1998.

3.1.4 Symbiotic Gaps

The foregoing considerations eliminate some of the most frequently cited arguments for the asymmetry between true and parasitic gaps that undergird movement-based accounts of filler/gap dependencies. As we have noted already, because movement of two or more *wh* constituents to a single filler position is essentially undefinable, parasitic gap constructions are necessarily treated as cases in which the legal movement of the overt filler justifies the existence of a second gap, not itself produced by that movement, which would otherwise not be possible. This is a stance that would obviously be strengthened if bona fide evidence for asymmetrical properties of the true and parasitic chains could be provided. The evidence offered, however, as we have just argued, turns out to be spurious.

But matters are even worse than this: there is evidence that pairs of extraction chains, neither of which is itself (presumably) legal, can license each other. This is a state of affairs that is exceedingly difficult to reconcile with the movement theory of filler/gap dependencies and its corollary requirement that when a single filler is connected to two or more gaps, one of the gaps must be independently licensed, with the possibility of other chains being dependent on the existence of the first.

The nature of this difficulty emerges clearly in the case of a rather understudied subtype of multiple-gap construction illustrated in (22):

⁸One might argue that the possibility of *thus(ly)* in examples like (i) indicates that the relevant environment is not antipronominal:

- (i) How harshly do you think we can treat THEM __ without in turn being treated thus(ly) OURSELVES?

However, this argument seems to us to have little force, given that *thusly* is severely register-restricted, or even archaic.