

Imperatives and their interaction with VP-ellipsis in Spanish

María Florencia Silva

IIF-SADAF-CONICET / Universidad de Buenos Aires

mfsilva@conicet.gov.ar



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Abstract

In this squib, I focus on the interaction between imperative formation and head stranding ellipsis in Spanish, with the aim of reassessing Martins' (1994) generalization that head movement from V to the polarity-encoding head Σ is a necessary condition for licensing predicate ellipsis. The author argues that Spanish affirmative imperatives, derived by head movement to Σ , behave as predicted by the theory, giving rise to a particular instance of verb stranding ellipsis. In this paper, I show that Spanish does not have the type of ellipsis she predicts in affirmative imperatives. Putative examples of V-stranding XP-ellipsis in the relevant environments are analyzed here as involving some sort of exophoric null object, consistent with Masullo's (2017) account. Thus, Spanish contrasts sharply with Portuguese, a language which does feature this variety of ellipsis. Consequently, there are important implications for the morphosyntax of Spanish imperatives, the licensing of ellipsis and, more broadly, the theory of head movement.

Keywords: imperatives, null objects, V-stranding XP-ellipsis, head movement, Spanish.

1. Introduction

The interaction between verb formation and other syntactic and morphological operations has been a topic under debate since at least Chomsky's (1957) theory of English morphosyntax. In this paper, I specifically focus on the interaction between imperative formation and TP-ellipsis in Spanish. I argue against the possibility of licensing a variety of head stranding TP-ellipsis via the formation of imperative verbs. In this respect, my conclusion can be read as a reaction to Martins' (1994), who argues for a generalization according to which if a Romance language exhibits verb movement to sigma (Σ), motivated by strong features on Σ itself, then it also licenses TP-ellipsis (*e.g.*, European Portuguese and Galician). On the contrary, Romance languages that do not have verb movement to Σ (*e.g.*, Spanish and Catalan) do not allow for this kind of ellipsis.

According to Martins "in languages like Spanish and Catalan, where VP-deletion is in general disallowed, imperative sentences constitute an exception. In this context, VP-deletion occurs. This is relevant because with respect to clitic placement, enclisis is obligatory in imperatives" (1994: 192). Putative examples of TP-ellipsis in Spanish imperative environments are the following:

- (1) Spanish (Martins 1994: 194)
- a. ¡Haz [e]!
do
'Do it!'
 - b. ¡Da [e]!
give
'Give it to me!'
 - c. ¡Cuenta [e]!
tell
'Tell (it to) me!'

In her analysis, it is the strong features in Σ in affirmative imperatives that trigger verb movement, licensing head stranding TP-ellipsis. Hereafter, I will argue that examples such as (1) do not involve syntactic deletion, but exophoric definite null objects. This account is based on the syntactic and discourse conditions licensing these examples, which meet the conditions of pragmatically controlled null objects.

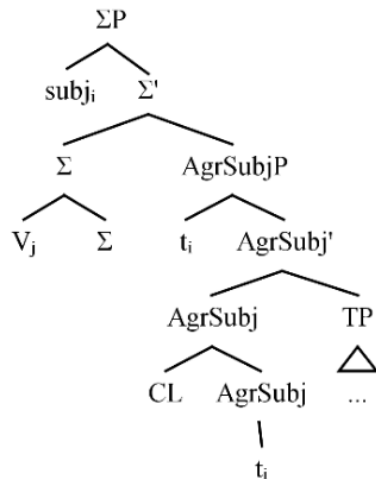
The squib is structured as follows. In section 2, I lay out Martins' analysis of VP-ellipsis and sum up the characterization she makes of the Σ head in Portuguese and Spanish. In subsection 2.1, I present Martins' take on Spanish declarative and imperative sentences. In section 3, I argue that the data given by Martins are not examples of ellipsis, but of exophoric null objects. In the same section, I also provide the conditions licensing definite null objects in imperative sentences. Finally, in section 4, I present some concluding remarks and certain open issues.

2. Martins' analysis of TP-deletion

Martins' account, framed within the *Minimalist Program* (Chomsky 1995), takes as a starting point a clause structure that includes the functional category ΣP in its

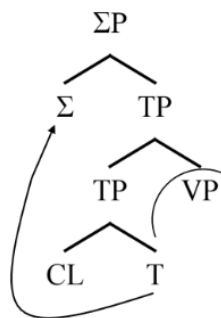
hierarchy. Σ P is merged between CP and AgrSubjP and licenses veritative operators and imperative values (Laka 1990). Therefore, given the hierarchical structure Σ P > AgrSubjP > TP > AgrObjP > VP, enclisis can be explained by postulating verb movement from V to Σ (see also Rivero & Terzi 1995) above a clitic left-adjoined to a lower functional projection, such as AgrSubjP (Kayne 1991) as can be seen in (2):¹

(2)



Therefore, according to this approach, enclisis is the result of two factors: (i) strong morphological V-features on Σ , and (ii) movement from V to Σ across the clitic to delete those strong features. This movement to a high position in the structure yields the typical verb-clitic order and, at the same time, can license Σ -stranding VP-ellipsis. Here, I will assume that this subtype of ellipsis is actually Σ -stranding TP-ellipsis. Otherwise, the adjoined clitic would remain undeleted once the ellipsis has taken place at the VP:²

(3)

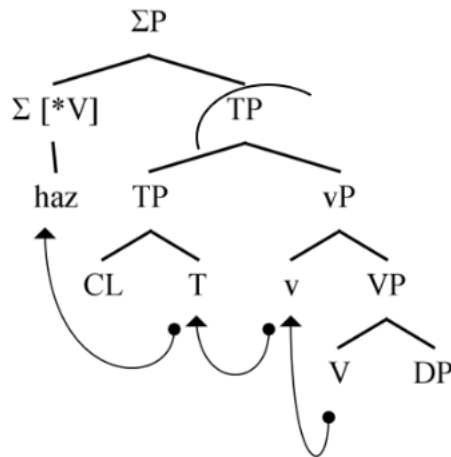


¹ It is worth noting that the movement of V° from a complex head such as AgrSubj yields excorporation, which is, in principle, banned due to the impossibility of leaving word-internal traces (Baker 1988). Nevertheless, Roberts (1991) observes that verb raising could provide evidence for excorporation in Dutch, for example, and according to Martins, the same seems to apply to Spanish imperatives.

² Martins' analysis departs from ellipsis as a deletion operation. Instead, the author considers the elided constituent a verbal *pro* form.

Given the hierarchy of the clause assumed by Martins, imperatives in Spanish and related languages can be derived via head movement. Concretely, she assumes that the head of Σ P has a strong feature [$*V$] in imperative clauses and attracts the verb from its position in V to Σ above the clitic left-adjoined to TP. Hence, on one hand, enclisis surfaces and, on the other, Σ -stranding TP-ellipsis is properly licensed:

Figure 1. Σ -stranding TP-ellipsis in Spanish imperative clauses



This analysis generalizes in other Romance languages that also feature enclisis in affirmative declarative clauses, like European Portuguese and Galician. In these languages, the correlation between enclisis and Σ -stranding TP-ellipsis is attested in short answers to *yes/no* questions. Both in (4) and (5), Portuguese and Galician, respectively, show an enclitic pattern in questions (4b)-(5b) and Σ -stranding TP-ellipsis in *yes/no* short answers (4c)-(5c).

- (4) European Portuguese (Martins 1994: 174)
- a. *Lhe deste o livro?
CL.DAT.3SG gave.2SG the book
 - b. Deste-lhe o livro?
gave.2SG-CL.DAT.3SG the book
'Did you give him/her the book?'
 - c. (Sim), dei [e].
yes, gave.1SG
'Yes, I did.'
 - d. Sim, dei-lho.
yes, gave.1SG-CL.DAT.3SG.CL.ACC.3SG
'Yes, I gave it to him/her.'
- (5) Galician (Martins 1994: 174)
- a. *Lhe deste o livro?
CL.DAT.3SG gave.2SG the book

- b. Déscheslle o livro?
 gave.2SG-CL.DAT.3SG the book
 ‘Did you give him/her the book?’
- c. (Sí), din [e].
 yes, gave.1SG
 ‘Yes, I did.’
- d. Sí, dinllo.
 yes, gave.1SG-CL.DAT.3SG.CL.ACC.3SG
 ‘Yes, I gave it to him/her.’

In short, *yes/no* questions can be answered by an affirmative or negative word plus the finite verb or just by repeating the finite verb, as shown by the optionality of (4c) and (5c). In Martins’ analysis, if the answer consists of a single finite verb, the verb moves to Σ to check strong morphological features on Σ itself. However, if the answer includes an affirmative or negative word plus a verb, as in European Portuguese, the former (*sim*) adjoins ΣP and the verb moves to Σ (see Holmberg 2001 for an alternative hierarchical structure and further details).

In contrast, Romance languages that show proclitic patterns as a consequence of weak morphological V-features of Σ do not allow for this kind of ellipsis in declarative environments:

- (6) Spanish (Martins 1994: 174)
- a. ¿Le diste el libro?
 CL.DAT.3SG gave.2SG the book
 ‘Did you give him/her the book?’
- b. *¿Distele el libro?
 gave.2SG-CL.DAT.3SG the book
- c. *Sí, di [e].
 yes, gave.1SG
- d. Sí, se lo di.
 yes, CL.DAT.3SG CL.ACC.3SG gave.1SG
 ‘Yes, I gave it to him/her.’

Now, Portuguese and Spanish pattern alike in negative clauses: the clitic always precedes the verb and follows negation. Thus, while Spanish keeps its proclitic pattern (7a), Portuguese displays an asymmetric syntactic behavior between affirmative clauses with the enclitic pattern (4d) and negative ones with the proclitic pattern (8b). As such, the negative word *não* is placed in Σ , so the verb cannot move further than T:

- (7) Spanish, (Martins 1994: 182)
- a. António no lo vio ayer. (Expected proclitic pattern)
 Anthony not CL.ACC.3SG.M saw yesterday
 ‘Anthony didn’t see him yesterday.’
- b. *António no violo ayer.
 Anthony not saw-CL.ACC.3SG.M yesterday

- (8) Portuguese (Martins 1994: 182)
- a. O António não o viu ontem. (Unexpected proclitic pattern)
 the Anthony not CL.ACC.3SG.M saw yesterday
 ‘Anthony didn’t see him yesterday.’
- b. *O António não viu-o ontem.
 the Anthony not saw-CL.ACC.3SG.M yesterday

In negative clauses in Portuguese, given that Σ has an overt lexical item (*não*), the movement of the verb to Σ does not take place due to the fact that “V-movement can be delayed until LF even though the relevant head contains strong features” (1994: 203). As a result, the Neg-CL-V order arises. However, in Spanish affirmative and negative clauses have weak features in Σ and the verb stays in T, yielding proclisis (7a).

Given Martins’ generalization, the presence of strong morphological features in both affirmative and negative clauses in Portuguese properly licenses ellipsis:

- (9) Portuguese (Martins 1994: 190)
- a. O João não viu a Maria mas o Pedro viu.
 ‘John didn’t see Mary but Peter did.’
- b. O João viu a Maria mas o Pedro não viu.
 ‘John saw Mary but Peter didn’t.’
- (10) Portuguese (Martins 1994: 188)
- a. Comeste o bolo?
 ‘Did you eat the cake?’
- i. (Sim,) comi.
 ‘Yes, I did.’
- ii. Não, não comi.
 ‘No, I didn’t.’
- b. Tens quarenta anos?
 ‘Are you forty years old?’
- i. (Sim,) tenho.
 ‘Yes, I am.’
- ii. Não, não tenho.
 ‘No, I don’t.’

As observed in (9) and (10), European Portuguese has Σ -stranding TP-ellipsis in affirmative and negative clauses because of the presence of strong morphological [*V] features in Σ . In affirmative clauses, feature checking is the result of verb movement to Σ (10ai-bi), while in negative clauses, it is the presence of the negative word that checks them, properly licensing the ellipsis (10aai-bii).³ As I said, Spanish

³ In contrast, Galician, which according to Martins, only has strong V-features in Σ in affirmative sentences, does not license VP-deletion in negative sentences:

- (1) Galician (Martins 1994: 188)
- a. Comiche-lo bolo?
 ‘Did you eat the cake?’

does not have strong V-features in affirmative or negative clauses. In consequence, VP-deletion is not allowed in the relevant declarative environments:

- (11) a. ¿Compraste el regalo de Marisol?
 ‘Did you buy Marisol’s present?’
 i. *Compré.
 ‘I did.’
 ii. (Sí), lo compré.
 ‘Yes, I did.’
 iii. *No compré.
 ‘I didn’t.’
 iv. (No), no lo compré.
 ‘No, I didn’t.’

Martins’ theory of verb formation in declarative clauses can be represented as follows:

Figure 2. Characterization of Sigma according to its morphological features in declarative clauses

	Portuguese	Spanish
Affirmative	+V strong	+V weak
Negative	+V strong	+V weak

As I just mentioned, this characterization in terms of feature strength aims at explaining how movement is triggered in each language and, as a consequence, how enclisis and proclisis arise.

2.1 About TP-ellipsis in Spanish imperatives

The asymmetry in clitic placement between negative and affirmative clauses displayed in Portuguese (8) is also attested in Spanish (12). However, the asymmetry is established between indicative clauses with proclitic pattern (7a) and imperative ones with obligatory enclitic pattern:

- (12) Spanish (Martins 1994: 194)
 a. Dímelo.
 tell-CL.DAT.1SG-CL.ACC.3SG
 yo no se lo dir-é a nadie.
 I not CL.DAT.3SG CL.ACC.3SG tell-FUT to anybody

-
- i. (Si,) comín.
 ‘Yes, I did.’
 ii. *Non, non comín.
 ‘No, I didn’t.’
 iii. Non, n’ó comín.
 ‘No, I didn’t.’

- ‘Tell me, I won’t tell it to anybody.’
 b. *Me lo di.
 CL.DAT.1SG CL.ACC.3SG tell
 ‘Tell me, I won’t tell it to anybody.’

In contrast, imperative negative clauses exhibit the expected proclitic pattern:

- (13) Spanish (Martins 1994: 194)⁴
 a. No me lo cuentas.
 not CL.DAT.1SG CL.ACC.3SG tell
 ‘Don’t tell it to me.’
 b. *No digasmelo.
 not tell-CL.DAT.1SG-CL.ACC.3SG

For Martins, the Spanish clitic placement patterns in declarative and imperative environments can then be characterized in terms of feature strength as follows:

Figure 3. Characterization of Sigma for Spanish indicative and imperative sentences

	Indicative	Imperative
Affirmative	+V weak	+V strong
Negative	+V weak	+V weak

As noted with respect to the pattern in (1), repeated below as (14), Martins claims that the active presence of strong features in Σ in affirmative imperatives triggers verb movement above the clitic, as shown in Figure 1, licensing head stranding TP-ellipsis:

- (14) Spanish (Martins 1994: 194)
 a. ¡Haz [e]!
 ‘Do it!’
 b. ¡Da [e]!⁵

⁴ All translations are mine.

⁵ Although Martins argues that a ditransitive verb such as *dar* allows deletion of all verbal complement, this example is really odd for me. While *dame* is good, *da* seems to be ungrammatical. The same happens with other ditransitive verbs such as *prestar* (‘to lend’) or *recomendar* (‘to recommend’) in absence of their complements:

- (1) a. *Prestá.
 ‘Lend (it to her/him).’
 b. *Recomendá.
 ‘Recommend (it to him/her).’

The impossibility of having structures such as (1) in Spanish is evidence in favor of the absence of VPE (VP-ellipsis). In contrast, languages like European Portuguese or Capeverdean, which have VPE, allow deletion of all the complements of ditransitive verbs:

- (2) Capeverdean (Costa, Martins & Pratas 2012: 156)
 a. Q: Bu da Manel livrus?

- ‘Give it to me!’
 c. ¡Cuenta [e]!
 ‘Tell (it to) me!’

Conversely, the presence of weak [*V] features in imperative negative clauses has two consequences. First, it results in the emergence of the proclitic pattern previously observed in (12) and second, in the absence of ellipsis as can be seen in (15):

- (15) Spanish (Martins 1994: 194)⁶
 a. *No hagas [e].
 ‘Don’t do it.’
 b. *No des [e].
 ‘Don’t give it to me.’
 c. *No cuentes [e].
 ‘Don’t tell (it to) me.’

In the next subsection, I will argue that Martins’ conclusion does not hold mainly because examples such as (14) do not involve Σ -stranding TP-ellipsis, but exophoric definite null objects.

3. Exophoric null objects

Hankamer & Sag (1976) identify two types of anaphoric phenomena: surface anaphora, in which there is deletion of syntactic structure (16), and deep anaphora, in which there is a null pronoun without internal structure (17).

- (16) a. VP-ellipsis, Portuguese, (Cyrino & Matos 2002: 178)
 A Ana já tinha lido o livro à irmã
 the Ana already had read the book to-the sister
 mas a Paula não tinha ~~lido o livro à irmã~~.
 but the Paula not [-]
 ‘Ana had already read that book to her sister, but Paula had not.’
- b. TP-ellipsis, Spanish (Saab 2008: 43)
 Juan fue al cine y María ~~fue al cine~~ también.
 ‘John went to the cinema and Mary did too.’
 (The translation is mine)
- c. Gapping, Spanish (Saab 2008: 43)
 Juan compró un libro y María ~~compró~~ una revista.

you give Manel books
 ‘Did you give Manel the books?’
 A: Sin, N da.
 yes, I give.
 ‘Yes, I did.’

⁶ All translations are mine.

‘John bought a book and Mary, a magazine.’
(The translation is mine)

- (17) a. Null complement anaphora
Te ofrecí venir pero no aceptaste \emptyset .
‘I offered you to come but you did not accept it.’
- b. Pro-form
Te dije que limpiaras la mesa pero no *lo* hiciste.
‘I told you to clean the table but you did not do it.’
- c. Indefinite null objects
- (i) Nicolás trajo cerveza y yo también traje \emptyset .
‘Nicolás brought beer and I brought (it) too.’
- (ii) ¿Necesitás plata?
‘Do you need money?’
Sí, necesito \emptyset .
‘Yes, I do.’

The facts in (17c) are of importance. Here, I will also take indefinite null objects in Spanish as instances of deep anaphora (cf. Campos 1986 and Verdecchia 2022). For the present section, it is worth noting that the data presented below not only covers phenomena of Rioplatense Spanish, but other varieties of Spanish as well.

All the deep anaphora examples in (17) are anaphoric null objects (NO_[an]), which are licensed by a linguistic antecedent. Furthermore, with respect to Martins’ sentences in (14), following Masullo (2017), I claim these cases do not involve head stranding ellipsis nor NO_[an] but exophoric null objects (NO_[ex]), which can only be pragmatically licensed through ostension. These pragmatically controlled null objects are not restricted to imperative contexts, such as those in (18) below; indeed, they are massively attested in other non-imperative sentences, whenever there are ostensive or strongly typified environments:

- (18) Spanish (Masullo 2017: 55-57)⁷
- a. ¡Tené (me)! (e.g., el paquete)
‘Hold (for me).’ (e.g., the package)
- b. Bajá, que no oigo. (e.g., el volumen)
‘Turn (it) down. I can’t hear.’ (e.g., the volume)
- c. Médico: A ver, abrí. (e.g., la boca)
‘Doctor: Let’s see. Open (it).’ (e.g., the mouth)
- (19) Spanish (Masullo 2017: 55)
- a. Dame que te tengo/lavo. (e.g., la camisa)
‘Give me. I hold (it for you)/wash (it for you).’ (e.g., the T-shirt)

⁷ All translations are mine.

- b. [Context: Nicolás is showing Brenda how to test if the Air Fryer is working properly. He explains how to take out the basket from the housing unit and how to put it on again while he is saying:]
 ‘Aprieto, saco y pongo de nuevo.’
 ‘I press, take out and put (it) on again.’
- c. [Context: Marisol is having dinner with her family and she has cooked lasagna. The lasagna has been in the oven for forty-five minutes, so she says to her sister:]
 ‘Voy a revisar. Si está, sirvo.’
 ‘I am going to check. If (it) is ready, I (will) serve.’

In interrogative sentences, they are also licensed:

- (20) a. ¿Cerraste? (e.g. la puerta)
 ‘Did you close (the door)?’
 b. ¿Escuchaste? (e.g., la noticia)
 ‘Did you hear (the news)?’

Note that if the examples in (20) were instances of V-stranding TP-ellipsis, it would be possible to have interrogative sentences with enclitic patterns as in (21). The fact that the sentences in (21) are ungrammatical shows that clitic placement seems to be irrelevant when it comes to definite null objects licensing.⁸

- (21) a. *¿Cerrástela?
 close-CL.ACC.3SG
 ‘Did you close it?’
 b. *¿Escuchástela?
 hear-CL.ACC.3SG
 ‘Did you hear it?’

Finally, as Masullo also shows, in discourse structures that have a definite linguistic antecedent, exophoric null objects are not licit.

- (22) Spanish (Masullo 2017: 65)
 a. *Ayer Juan vio una película muy buena, pero no disfrutó [e].
 ‘Yesterday John saw a very good movie but he did not enjoy (it).’
 b. A: ¿Dónde guardaste los archivos?
 ‘Where did you save the files?’
 B: *Guardé en el cajón.
 ‘I saved it in the drawer of the desk.’

So, examples (18), (19) and (24) sharply contrast with those in (22) and (23) in that contextual salience is a requirement for definite null objects. Indefinite null objects, instead, can also be linguistically licensed by an antecedent in the linguistic discourse. In this regard, Spanish does not license sentences like (23) with definite anaphoric null objects even in imperative contexts. This follows again from Masullo’s

⁸ I am grateful to one of my reviewers for bringing this argument and examples to my attention.

observation that null objects are only licensed through pragmatic ostension as shown in the below mentioned examples:

- (23) a. *Agarrá las manzanas y pesá [e].
 take apples and weigh
 ‘Take apples and weigh [e].’
 b. *Buscá los pañuelitos y pagá.
 look-for the kleenex and pay
 ‘Look for some kleenex and pay [e].’

In this respect, even Martins’ original examples in (14) are infelicitous out of the blue. In order to have licit examples of null definites, a lot of contextual information is needed. Compare, then, the examples in (14) with those in (24), which are perfectly grammatical and felicitous once (i) we add the required contextual information, and (ii) we add an act of demonstration / ostension:

- (24) a. [Context: Brenda and Nicolás are in the cinema queue waiting for their tickets. Brenda is with drinks and a bowl of popcorn in her hands, so she asks Nicolás if he can grab the tickets.]
 Brenda says: ¡Agarrá!
 ‘Grab (the tickets)!’
 b. [Context: Soledad has been invited to a TV show to speak about her research. However, the host is more impressed by her dress than by her research. The TV host asks Soledad to show her dress.]
 The TV host says: ¡Mostrá!
 ‘Show (your dress)!’
 c. [Context: Brenda has invited her friend over to tell them some exciting news about her future. Nicolás arrives earlier than the rest because he can’t wait for the news.]
 Nicolás says: ¡Contá!
 ‘Tell (the news to me)!’

Furthermore, although Martins claims that the presence of weak features in negative clauses bans the presence of ellipsis (see her examples in (15)), I would like to note that the same specific discourse conditions that make (24) perfectly legitimate license negative imperatives with NO_[ex], as well:

- (25) a. [Context: Brenda and Nicolás are in the cinema queue waiting for their tickets. Brenda knows that Nicolás is a bit distracted and will lose the tickets.]
 Brenda says: No agarres.
 ‘Don’t grab (the tickets).’
 b. [Context: Soledad has been invited to a TV show to speak about her research. However, the host is more impressed by her dress than by her research. The TV host asks Soledad to show her dress but the audience expresses its rejection.]
 The audience says: No muestres.
 ‘Don’t show (your dress).’

- c. [Context: Brenda has invited her friend over to tell them some exciting news about her future. Nicolás arrives earlier and Brenda tells him the news but asks him for silence.]
Brenda says: No cuentos.
'Don't tell (the news).'

This is not the expected scenario under Martins' analysis. On the exophoric null object analysis, instead, the pattern in (25) above is fully expected. Moreover, we also predict that clitic placement is irrelevant: to the extent that the discourse conditions are met, definite null objects can easily occur in non-imperative sentences, such as (19) and (20), or in negative imperative sentences, which trigger proclisis, not enclisis.

I would like to conclude by mentioning an additional piece of evidence for the analysis defended here. As shown in (26) below, there are no animate NO_{S[ex]}, a fact that reinforces my hypothesis, since, as is well known, null objects in Spanish are licit only when they are specified as inanimate (see also Goldberg 2005).⁹

- (26) a. [Context: Brenda and Nicolás are at the mall. Nicolás sees Brenda's mother inside a shop and waves his hand at her.]
Nicolás says to Brenda: *Abrazá.
'Hugh [e].'
b. [Context: Ana and Victor are celebrating their wedding anniversary. After the toast, Victor gives a beautiful present to Ana].
One of the guests says to Ana: *Besá.
'Kiss [e].'
c. [Context: Sasha and Ezequiel are drinking beer in the garden. Suddenly, their dog jumps on Sasha and the beer spills on the dog].
Ezequiel says to Sasha: *Bañá.
'Wash [e].'
d. [Context: Sol and Matías are cooking dinner and their baby starts to cry].
Sol says to Matías: *Calmá.
'Calm [e].'

I have claimed that, according to our diagnostics, the data in (14) repeated above involve null objects pragmatically licensed in ostensive contexts:

- (27) Spanish (Martins 1994: 194)
a. ¡Haz [e]!
'Do it!'

⁹ There are some very typified contexts in which it is possible to have animate exophoric null objects:

- (1) a. Saludá [e].
'Greet her/him/pro.'
b. Decí [e] hola/chau.
'Say hi/bye to her/him/pro.'

- b. ¡Da [e]!¹⁰
 ‘Give it to me!’
 c. ¡Cuenta [e]!
 ‘Tell (it to) me!’

As shown in figure 4, it is only possible to have null objects in imperative ostensive contexts. Moreover, anaphoric null objects of Spanish follow the animacy restriction and cannot be definite or indefinite in imperative clauses. Here, I sum up the conditions discussed so far:

Figure 4. Exophoric definite null objects in Spanish.

Licensing of definite null objects in imperative contexts	Ostensive condition	Animacy condition	Anaphoric condition
	✓	X	X

4. Conclusions

I have reassessed Martins’ generalization that verb head movement to Σ licenses verbal predicate ellipsis, which I assume as instantiating Σ -stranding TP-ellipsis. Contra her analysis I have shown that Spanish does not have this kind of ellipsis in affirmative imperative contexts; the grammatical silence we observe surfaces in particular instances of ostensive but definite null objects which are subject to pragmatic conditions.

¹⁰ Although Martins argues that a ditransitive verb such as *dar* allows deletion of all verbal complement, this example is really odd for me. While *dame* is good, *da* seems to be ungrammatical. The same happens with other ditransitive verbs such as *prestar* (‘to lend’) or *recomendar* (‘to recommend’) in absence of their complements:

- (3) a. *Prestá.
 ‘Lend (it to her/him).’
 b. *Recomendá.
 ‘Recommend (it to him/her).’

The impossibility of having structures such as (1) in Spanish is evidence in favor of the absence of VPE (VP-ellipsis). In contrast, languages like European Portuguese or Capeverdean, which have VPE, allow deletion of all the complements of ditransitive verbs:

- (4) Capeverdean (Costa, Martins & Pratas 2012: 156)
 a. Q: Bu da Manel livrus?
 you give Manel books
 ‘Did you give Manel the books?’
 A: Sin, N da.
 yes, I give.
 ‘Yes, I did.’

As a final remark, I would like to add that, while the reaction of this squib was directed to Martins' own proposal (although similar criticism extends to other recent accounts like Thoms 2018), it remains to be answered which are the necessary and sufficient conditions that allow verbal stranding ellipsis in Romance and beyond.

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