Landau 2013: Chapter 3

Empirical arguments for PRO
“Suppose we establish a generalization G that refers to lexical (i.e. overt) subjects. Suppose further that we show G to be truly syntactic, i.e., irreducible to ulterior concepts (e.g., thematic prominence, semantic recoverability, discourse salience etc.). Now we turn to control infinitives and check whether G holds in them. If it does, we have produced a pretty solid argument for the existence of PRO.”
Two types of evidence:

- evidence for a clausal analysis of infinitives
- evidence directly pertaining to the presence of PRO
Infinitives are clausal (hence, contain a subject) (Landau’s 3.1)

-Infinitives can be introduced by elements in the CP area: WH, complementsizers:

1.

a. Mary asked **which way** to go

b. John probeerde [**om** het boek te lezen].  
John tried **COMP** the book to read  
‘John tried to read the book.’

Cc. Gil nimna **me-le’āšen** sigaryot.  
Gil refrain from-to.smoke cigarettes  
‘Gil refrains from smoking cigarettes.’
Control Infinitives can be conjoined with clauses. On the assumption that only likes conjoin, we conclude that control infinitives are clauses:

2.

a. To write a novel and for the world to give it critical acclaim is John’s dream.

b. John expected to write a novel but that it would be a critical disaster.

Do we have support for such an assumption?
-VP ellipsis strands items in $I^0$. Projections of $I^0$ are clauses. VP-ellipsis in infinitives strands *to*, which can/should be seen as an element of (infinitival) $I^0$, hence the infinitive is clausal:

3.

a. She didn’t hope that Brian would recover soon, but we did __.
b. She didn’t hope to recover soon, but we hoped to __.
Syntactic evidence for PRO (Landau’s 3.2)

-secondary predicates require a DP:

4. a. John ate (the meat).
   b. John ate *(the meat) raw.
   c. He served dinner angry at the guests.
   d. *Dinner was served angry at the guests.

Hence there must be a PRO present to “carry” the secondary predicate in (5):

5.a. The meat was too chewy [PRO to be eaten raw]
   b. [PRO to serve dinner angry at the guests] is bad bad manners
Floated quantifiers require the syntactic presence of a DP

6a. They have all gained something.
   b. * Something has all been gained.
      Hence there must be a PRO present in (6c, d):
   c. They wanted [PRO to all gain something].
   d. [PRO to all gain something], they knew, would be a miracle.
-Plural agreement requires a plural DP:

7a. * John hoped that his uncle would be partners.
   b. * This group is/are partners.

   Hence there must be a PRO present in (8):

8. John$_i$ proposed to his uncle$_j$ [PRO$_{i+j}$ to be partners].
Case Concord: In many languages, NP and AP predicates require Case. This Case is the same as that of the subject of the predicate (by some mechanism of concord with the subject).

With infinitives, the Case on the predicate does not have to be the same as that of the Controller. Hence the predicate gets its Case from some subject DP:

8.

a. **Russian**
   Ona poprosila ego ne ezdit’ tuda odnomu zavtra. she.NOM asked him.ACC not to-go there alone.DAT tomorrow
   ‘She asked him not to go there alone tomorrow.’

b. **Icelandic**
   Ólaf hafði ekki gaman af að vanta einan í veisluna. Olaf.NOM had not pleasure of to lack alone.ACC to party.the
   ‘Olaf didn’t find it pleasurable to be absent alone from the party.’
-Binding tests argue for the existence of PRO by making it easier to explain Binding Condition A and B phenomena:

9a. Mary$_i$ planned [PRO$_i$ to buy herself$_{ij}$ a new coat].

b. Vivian convinced him$_{ij}$ [PRO$_i$ to forgive John’s$_j$ cousin].

10a. [PRO$_i$ behaving oneself$_i$ in restaurants] would be necessary.

b. Mary$_i$ realized that it would be useless [PRO$_i$ to nominate herself$_i$ for the job].
A similar argument can be found in languages whose (possessive) anaphors are only subject-oriented but can be bound in infinitives by apparent non-subjects. Of course they are bound by PRO:

11. a. John ubedil Maryi [PROi navestit svoji sestru]. Russian
   John persuaded Mary to.visit SELF’s sister
   ‘John persuaded Mary to visit her own sister.’

   b. Sie hat dem Hansi erlaubt [PROi sichi den Fisch German
   She has the.DAT John allowed SELF the.ACC fish
   mit Streifen vorzustellen].
   with stripes to.imagine
   ‘She allowed John to imagine what the fish would look like with stripes.’
Reciprocals do not take split antecedents, as is seen in (12a). What is going on in (12b) then? There must be a PRO present that binds the reciprocal.

12.

  a. * John talked with Mary about each other.
  b. John\textsubscript{i} proposed to Mary\textsubscript{j} [PRO\textsubscript{i+j} to help each other\textsubscript{i+j}].
13a. [___ realizing that Oscar$_i$ was unpopular] didn’t disturb him.

b. John$_i$ reminded us that [___to push him$_i$ any further] would be useless.

c. [___ realizing that he was unpopular] didn’t disturb him.

d. [___ realizing that he was unpopular] didn’t disturb Oscar.

What are the possible interpretations of the empty subject and why?

There is a syntactically active (yet unpronounced) DP in the subject position!
14a. *The organizer met
   b. *Mary kissed

15a. The organizer decided [PRO to meet right before the parade].
   b. John felt sorry that Mary regretted [PRO kissing the night before].
-Expletive constructions: there is no $\text{PRO}_{\text{expl}}$:

16a. It is obvious that Bill is lying
   b. It is required that we wear helmets in class

17a. *[PRO to be obvious that Bill is lying] would be a shame.
   b. *It is illegal [PRO to be required that we wear helmets in class].

Can you run the same test for expletive *there*?
Can you formulate this restriction without recourse to PRO?
Landau: no.
When you have a phonetically non-overt syntactic category, two issues arise

-licensing
-interpretation/identification

What can we say about licensing so far?
What can we say about interpretation/identification?
References
