

Generic inclusive null arguments in Hungarian
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1. *Theoretical background*

Whether a language allows generic subjects to be null (Finnish, Brazilian Portuguese) or not (Italian, European Portuguese) seems to play a crucial role in recent typologies of Null Subject Languages (NSLs) (Holmberg 2005, Roberts&Holmberg 2010, Biberauer 2010, Holmberg&Sheehan 2010). The generic inclusive ‘one’ vs. generic exclusive ‘people’ interpretations of impersonal SI in Italian (Cinque 1988, Chierchia 1995) often overlap. This justifies a feature geometric approach to them along the lines of Harley&Ritter (2002). A similar approach is offered here to generic inclusive null arguments in Hungarian.

2. *Hungarian generic inclusive null arguments*

Hungarian is often identified as a Consistent Null Subject Language (É.Kiss 2002, Tóth 2010, Egerland&Sigurdhsson 2009), similar to Italian. This classification is based, among other things, on the syntactic properties of generic exclusive null arguments with the ‘people’ interpretation, neglecting the syntactic and semantic properties of generic inclusive null arguments with the ‘one’ interpretation (the former exclude, while the latter include the speaker and the addressee, see Holmberg 2005, Moltmann 2006, 2010, 2012):

- (1) A középkorban félték *az emberek/pro_{arb}* a villámlástól.
in the Middle Ages feared the people/(the people) the lightening
‘In the Middle Ages people feared lightening.’ (Tóth 2008)

- (2) *Az ember/*pro_{GN}* fél a villámlástól.
the man (the man) fears the lightening
‘One fears lightening.’

Semantically, generic exclusive arguments are quantificational, while generic inclusive arguments are first person-oriented, contextually determined items with modal import (see Moltmann 2006, 2010, 2012). Syntactically, generic exclusive null arguments in Hungarian do not require a lexical antecedent/controller, generic inclusive null arguments always do:

- (3) Péter tudja, hogy a középkorban félték
Peter knows that in the Middle Ages feared
*az emberek/pro_{arb}/*i* a villámlástól.
the people/(the people) the lightening
‘Peter knows that in the Middle Ages people feared lightening.’

- (4) Péter tudja, hogy fél *az ember/*pro_{GN}* a villámlástól.
Peter knows that fears the man / (the man) the lightening
‘Peter knows that one fears lightening.’

- (5) *Az ember/*pro_{GN}* tudja, hogy **az ember/pro_{GN}* fél a villámlástól.
the man /(the man) knows that the man / (the man) fears the lightening
‘One knows that one fears lightening.’

One important property that distinguishes Hungarian from the four major types of NSLs identified by Roberts&Holmberg (2010) is that it allows any argument to become null. This property is often referred to as radical *pro*-drop (Huang 1984). Hungarian crucially differs, however, from Radical Null Subject Languages (NSLs) in that it does not allow the alternation of generic inclusive and unique reference null arguments, as does Chinese or Japanese (see Holmberg&Sheehan 2010):

(6) János_i nem szereti, [ha *pro*_i/**pro*_{GN} elfárad a munkában].
John not likes when he/one gets_tired the work-in
'John_i does not like if he_i/*one gets tired at work.'

(7) John_i-wa kono beddo-de-wa yoku nemu-reru-to *pro*_i/GEN iu
John-TOP this bed-in-TOP well sleep-can-COMP (he/one) say
'John_i says that *he*/*one* can sleep well in this bed.'
(Japanese, Holmberg and Sheehan 2010: 130)

3. The feature geometry of generic inclusive, generic exclusive and unique reference arguments in a cross-linguistic perspective

It is proposed that the generic inclusive, generic exclusive or unique reference interpretations of an argument are conditional not merely on its feature composition but also how these features are licensed in SpeechParticipantPhrase (SAPP), the leftmost projection of the C-domain (see also Bianchi 2004, D'Alessandro&Alexiadou 2003). If both the [+GN] and [+SAP] features of an argument are licensed by the GN operator in SAPP, the generic inclusive reading arises. Licensing the [+GN] feature alone gives the generic exclusive reading. The GN operator has the whole proposition in its scope and licenses the imperfective feature in the clause in Italian and Polish (D'Alessandro 2007, Krzek 2012). In the absence of GN the verb licenses its perfective feature in ASPP. Unique reference arguments have their [+phi] features licensed in TP in the canonical way (see also Dalmi 2013)

References

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