

The feature geometry of 3SG generic null subjects vs. 3SG referential null subjects

1 Holmberg (2010) establishes the following correlation between Partial vs. Consistent Null Subject Languages:

Partial NSLs: 3SG generic subjects must be null.
3SG referential subjects must not be null.

Consistent NSLs: 3SG generic subjects must not be null.
3SG referential subjects can be null.

(1) Tässä *pro*_{GEN/*i} istuu mukavasti.
here (one/*he) sits comfortably
'One/*He can sit comfortably here.' (Finnish, Holmberg 2010)

(2) Hän istuu mukavasti tässä.
he sits comfortably here
'He sits comfortably here.'

(3) Se *si*/**pro* e morti, non ci *si*/**pro* muove piu.
if one is dead not RFL one move any more
'If one is dead, one does not move any more.' (Italian, D'Alessandro & Alexiadou 2003)

2 Hungarian seemingly patterns with Consistent NSLs in that it requires 3SG generic inclusive subjects to be lexical:

(4) [_{CP}Az *ember*_{GEN} mindig fél-0-0, [_{CP}hogy le-zuhan-0
the man always fear-PRES-3SG that off-crash-PRES3SG

a repülőgép]].
the airplane

'One always fears that the airplane will crash.'

Indeed, a matrix 3SG *pro* can only be interpreted with unique reference but not as generic inclusive:

(5) [_{CP}Mindig fél *pro*_{i/*GEN,} [_{CP}hogy le-zuhan-0
always fear-PRES3SG s/he/*one that PFX-crash-PRES3SG

a repülőgép]].
the airplane

'S/he /*One always fears that the airplane will crash.'

In discourse-semantically neutral sentences, the generic inclusive lexical subject *az ember* 'the man' can serve as an antecedent for reflexives, (6), for the null subject of depictive adjunct predicates, (7), and can control the PRO_{GEN} subject of infinitival clauses, (8) (see É.Kiss 1987, 2002 and Kenesei 1989, 1992 on pronominal binding in Hungarian discourse-semantically marked and neutral sentences):

(6) Manapság *az ember*_{GEN} lát-hat-ja magát-t_{GEN/*i} az internet-en.
nowadays the man see-OPT-3SG self-ACC the internet-SBL
'Nowadays one can see oneself/*himself on the internet.'

(7) [_{CP}Az *ember*_{GEN} nem vizsgál-0 beteg-et_i, [_{CP} amikor
the man not examine-PRES3SG patient-ACC when

*pro*_{GEN/*i} /**ő*_{GEN/i} részeg 0]].

(the man/*he_{GEN/i}) drunk COP.PRES3SG

'One does not examine a patient when one/*he is drunk.'



PDF Editor

(8) [CP Azok-ban az idők-ben az ember_{GEN} nem akar-t
 those-INESS the times-INESS the man not want-PAST3SG

[CP meg-operál-ni PRO_{GEN} egy halálos beteg-et]].
 PFX-operate-INF (the man) a lethally ill patient-ACC

'In those times, one would not want to operate on lethally ill patients.'

Unlike its Italian counterpart, (3), the generic inclusive lexical subject *az ember* 'the man', can also serve as an antecedent for *pro*_{GEN} in Hungarian, (9a)-(9b):

(9a) [CP Az ember_{GEN} nem készül ar-ra, [CP hogy pro_{GEN}/*ő_{GEN}
 the man not prepare-PRES3SG it-SBL that (the man/*he)

meg-hal-0]].

PFX-die-PRES3SG

'One is not prepared (for it) that one/*he_i will die.'

(9b) [CP Az ember-nek_{GEN} kínos 0, [CP ha pro_{GEN} /*ő_{GEN}
 the man-DAT embarrassing COP.PRES3SG if (the man/*he)

izzad-0]].

sweat-PRES3SG

'It is embarrassing (for one) if one/*he sweats.'

The binding properties of generic inclusive null subjects isolate Hungarian both from Consistent NSLs and from Partial NSLs. In the former, 3SG generic inclusive null subjects (*pro*_{GEN}) are absent, (1); in the latter, they do not need a lexical antecedent, (2). Hungarian *pro*_{GEN} always requires a 3SG generic inclusive antecedent in the higher clause, (6)-(7).

3 3SG referential null subjects can be clearly distinguished from 3SG generic inclusive null subjects in Hungarian in that the former can alternate with a 3SG referential pronoun while the latter cannot (see Kenesei 1989 on the binding conditions of preverbal and postverbal referential pronouns in Hungarian):

(10a) Péter_i az-t hiszi, hogy ő_i/pro_i sokáig fog élni.
 Peter it-ACC believes that (he) for long will live
 'Peter_i believes that he_i will live long.'

(10b) Az ember_{GEN} az-t hiszi, hogy pro_{GEN} /*ő_{GEN} sokáig fog élni.
 the man it-ACC believes that (the man)/*he for long will live
 'One_{GEN} believes that one_{GEN}/*he_{GEN} will live long.'

3SG referential pronominal and null subjects have unique reference and accept only antecedents with unique reference. 3SG generic inclusive subjects are first-person oriented, group-denoting items with attitudinal modal base, in the scope of GEN. (Moltmann 2006, 2010, 2012). GEN ranges over accessible worlds. When it is restricted to the actual world, 3SG generic inclusive subjects acquire 3PL, 1SG or 1PL unique reference interpretation (see Cinque 1988, on Italian *si*, Egerland & Sigurdhsson 2009 on Icelandic *madhur*, Krzek 2012 on Polish *si*, respectively). D'Alessandro & Alexiadou (2003) derive the alternation between the unique vs. generic reference of impersonal *si* in Italian from *phi* feature agreement of *si* either in ASPP or in SpeechActP (SAPP) (Sigurdhsson 2004). This cannot be extended to Hungarian, where syntactic aspect does not correlate with such interpretive differences.

It is proposed that the [+gen] feature of generic inclusive subjects must be licensed in SAPP via *Cyclic Agree* (Bejar & Rezac 2009). Unique reference subjects do not have a [+gen] feature and license their *phi* features in canonical ways. The different ways of licensing explain generic vs. unique reference alternation cross-linguistically.