Nikolett F. Gulyás (Eötvös Loránd University)

Who are *they*? R-impersonals in Finno-Ugric

Although strategies for encoding impersonality show broad variety cross-linguistically, this topic has received more attention in linguistic typology only recently (cf. Sansò 2006). On the basis of Keenan's (1976) definition on prototypical subjects, Malchukov and Ogawa (2011) provides a classification of impersonal constructions. In their view, depending on which prototypical property the subject lacks in a given construction, impersonals can be divided into three main categories: those sensitive to a) reference and definiteness (R-impersonals), b) agentivity and animacy (A-impersonals), and c) topicality (T-impersonals) properties of the subject (Malchukov & Ogawa 2011: 44–45).

The present talk focuses on a subtype of R-impersonals, namely 3rd person plural (3Pl) impersonals – and to some extent on impersonal passives – in four Finno-Ugric languages: Finnish, Mari, Komi-Permyak and Surgut Khanty, compared to Hungarian. Additionally, it aims to outline the main semantic and morphosyntactic characteristics of these constructions. The data examined in this study were elicited from native speakers using four questionnaires including translation tasks and an acceptability judgement test, and a corpus compiled on parallel translations of a Russian novel (PM) containing ca. 13,000 tokens for each language.

3Pl impersonals do not show structural variation, since they have fixed morphosyntactic features. The verbal predicate is always in 3Pl form agreeing with the pronominal subject. Syntactically, the equivalents of the Hungarian 3Pl impersonals expressed by intransitive and transitive verbs can be summarized as follows:

Hungarian	Surgut Khanty	Komi-Permyak	Mari	Finnish
3Pl intr.	3Pl intr.	3Pl intr.	3Pl intr.	passive
3Pl tr.	passive/(3Pl tr.)	3Pl tr.	3Pl tr.	passive/(3Pl non-impersonal)

Table 1
Equivalents of Hungarian 3Pl impersonals according transitivity

From a functional viewpoint, 3Pl impersonals can be divided into three major subgroups: constructions with generic, episodic, and specific usages. 3Pl impersonals with generic usage typically mark habitual actions, or they code other irrealis contexts as probability, negation or modality:

(1) *Oroszország-ban*   *sok*   *hal-at*   *esz-nek.*   (Hu.)
     Russia-INE   many   fish-ACC   eat-3PL

(2) *Rūtʼ*   *məɣ-nə*   *ürɣem*   *qūʌ*   *ʌī-ʌ-ət.*   (S. Kh.)
     Russian   land-LOC   many   fish   eat-PRS-3PL

(3)   *Rośśija-yn*   *śojö-ny*   *una*   *ćeri.*   (Ko-Pe.)
        Russia-INE   eat-3PL   many   fish

(4)   *Rossij∂-šte*   *šuko*   *kol-∂m*   *koćk-∂t.*   (Ma.)
        Russia-INE   many   fish-ACC   eat-3PL

        In Russia, they eat a lot of fish.'

3Pl impersonals with episodic usage describe events anchored in time, usually with perfective aspect, but sometimes the verb can refer to a present tense event. Temporal anchoring narrows the possible referents of the subject. The subject of constructions with specific usage can be understood from the context, which typically have special local and temporal settings. The subject here is a specified but non-determined, concrete entity (Siewierska 2011: 61–65). In the related languages, the following constructions are used as compared to Hungarian:

Hungarian	Surgut Khanty	Komi-Permyak	Mari	Finnish
generic	3Pl passive	3Pl	3Pl	impersonal passive
episodic	passive	3Pl (passive participle)	3Pl (passive participle)	impersonal passive
specific	3Pl	3Pl	3Pl	impersonal passive

Table 2
Equivalents of Hungarian 3Pl impersonals according to usage

Finnish uses impersonal passives, e.g. formally agentless passive constructions with an inherently involved human initiator in all the three functions mentioned above. My talk will introduce the results of the study in further details, with a special reference to each functions of Pl3 impersonal constructions.

References

Keenan, Edward 1976. Towards a universal definition of "subject". In Li, Charles (ed.), *Subject and Topic*, 305–334. New York: Academic Press.

Malchukov, Andrej & Ogawa, Akio 2011. Towards a typology of impersonal constructions. A semantic map approach. In Malchukov, Andrej & Anna Siewierska (eds.), *Impersonal constructions. A cross-linguistic perspective*, 19–56. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

PM = *Pavlik Morozov –paralleelitekstikorpus*. The Turku – VOLGCOMP corpus. Turku: Research Unit for Volgaic Languages, University of Turku.

Sansò, Andrea 2006. 'Agent defocusing' revisited. Passive and impersonal constructions in some European languages. In Abraham, Werner & Larisa Leisiö (eds.), *Passivization and Typology,* 232–273. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Siewierska, Anna 2011. Overlap and complementarity in reference impersonals. Man-constructions vs. third person plural-impersonals in the languages of Europe. In Malchukov, Andrej & Anna Siewierska (eds.), *Impersonal constructions. A cross-linguistic perspective*, 57–89. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.