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Quo Vadis (Lingua) Hungari(c)a?

... *all my reasons* ...

It has been claimed in the literature (Gärtner 2009; Gärtner 2015: Chapter 5) that the following correlation holds between inventories of pronouns and clause types.

- (1) If a language *L* possesses embedded non-finite (*wh*-)interrogatives, then the pronominal system of *L* does not possess any indefinite/interrogative ambiguity.

Starting point for the investigation underlying (1) was the contrast between English and German in (2) and (3) (where (2b), (3b), and (3d) directly translate (2a), (3a), and (3c), respectively).

- (2) a. *Mary suddenly remembered [where to find the keys].*
b. **Maria erinnerte sich plötzlich [wo die Schlüssel (zu) finden].*
- (3) a. *Who called?* c. *Someone called.*
b. *Wer hat angerufen?* d. *Es hat wer angerufen.*

Crucially, in English, presence of embedded non-finite interrogatives correlates with the absence of dual use pronouns corresponding to German *wer*.

(1) – recast as [+enfi] ⇒ [i≠i] – predicts a typology, which (4) exemplifies with a small set of “easy to establish” cases.

- (4) a. [+enfi, i=i]: ∅
 b. [+enfi, i≠i]: *Basque, English, French, Finnish, Modern Hebrew, Italian, Polish, (Eur.) Portuguese, Spanish*
 c. [−enfi, i=i]: *German*
 d. [−enfi, i≠i]: *Danish, Norwegian, Swedish*

(1)/(4) raises many questions, of course. From the perspective of theoretical linguistics, finding an account for (1) should top the list. The above cited literature does not go beyond preliminary speculation here. But, looking at individual languages might equally be rewarding. Take Hungarian, for example. It seems to belong to type (4d) [−enfi, i≠i]. Pronouns like *ki* (*Ki csengetett?* 'Who rang the bell?') and *valaki* (*Valaki csengetett.* 'Someone rang the bell.') are non-interchangeable. And, in spite of apparent counterexamples (Kenesei 1994:340), embedded non-finite interrogatives do not occur productively, as indicated in (5), meant to directly translate (2a).

- (5) **Marinak hirtelen eszébe jutott (hogy) hol megtalálni a kulcsokat.*

Now, interestingly, (1) is compatible with [−enfi, i≠i]-languages changing in one of two directions: either [−enfi] >> [+enfi] or [i≠i] >> [i=i]. The former seems to have occurred in (varieties of) Fenno-Swedish (Holmberg 1983), presumably under the influence of Finnish. The latter appears to have been part of the change from Middle High German to Modern German (Behaghel 1923). So, we are justified to ask:

Which way, if any, will Hungarian go?

References

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