

On a 3SG generic impersonal in Polish: Impoverished subjunctive in a consistent null subject language

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Background. A core property differentiating between consistent (CNSLs) and partial (PNSLs) null subject language types in the widely adopted typology of null subject languages (Holmberg 2010, Roberts 2019) is the means of encoding generic speaker-inclusive reference. In PNSLs, 3SG null subjects in main clauses have that interpretation by default, while definite reference to an individual requires c-command by an antecedent, strong context, or other language-specific means. In CNSLs, 3SG null subjects never have generic reference and that meaning is achieved through overt marking, e.g. a reflexive clitic, or special voice-related constructions. The contrast is attributed to the features of T: in CNSLs, T bears a feature (D or Pers) which licenses definite null subjects in all persons but necessitates special means for generic reference, while in PNSLs T does not have D or Pers, which opens the possibility of generic reference. Slavic languages complicate the picture: East Slavic PNSLs do not have a 3SG generic pronoun (Madariaga 2022, Tsedryk 2022); while Kashubian is reported to allow 3SG generic null subject for a subclass of verbs (modals), showing CNSL-like properties otherwise (Ruda 2024).

Data. For some Polish speakers it is possible to use a 3SG null subject with generic reference without a lexical generic antecedent in subjunctive clauses, which has not been previously discussed at length in the literature (although it was mentioned by Pisarkowa 1984, and noticed in Middle Polish by Holvoet & Daugavet 2022). In the subjunctive, the person-number marking in first and second person attaches to the particle *by* (as in 1a), and in third person it is null. The main verb is a participle inflected for the number and gender of the subject. (1b) is ambiguous: the subject of the embedded clause can refer to a masculine antecedent, or it can be interpreted as generic.

- (1) Fabuła tej powieści nie ma sensu... ‘The plot of this novel doesn’t make sense...’
a. jak *by-ś* nad tym pomyślał. b. jak *by* nad tym pomyślał.
if SUBJ-2SGover this think.PTCP.MSG if SUBJ over this think.PTCP.MSG
‘...if you thought about it.’ (i) ‘...if he thought about it.’
(ii) ‘...if one thought about it.’

Analysis. In her discussion of Kashubian data, Ruda (2024) links 3SG generic null subjects to the optional uninterpretability of the Person feature on T, when the verb in question is a modal. I adopt this idea for the Polish data. In the subjunctive, the particle *by* is merged in Mood directly below T. The Mood head does not have phi-features, as evidenced by its ability to combine with infinitives and the impersonal *-no/-to* participle. While in most cases T has interpretable person and number features, realised as the marker shown in (1a) (Migdalski 2006), or without an overt morphological manifestation in third person, the impersonal reading results from the optional uninterpretability of the Person feature on T. The null pronoun is a minimal nP devoid of phi-features. The masculine singular specification showing in the inflection of the *l*-participle is assigned by default. The proposed solution does not contradict the classification of Polish as a CNSL but shows that more research into variation within NSL types is necessary.

Holmberg, A. 2010. Null subject parameters. In *Parametric variation*, 88–124. Cambridge: CUP. • Holvoet, A. & Daugavet, A. 2022. Types of null arguments in Baltic. In *Null subjects in Slavic and Finno-Ugric*, 205–228. Boston/Berlin: De Gruyter. • Madariaga, N. 2022. On partial null subject languages: Why pro-drop in Brazilian Portuguese and Russian became similar but not identical. *Revista de Estudos da Linguagem* 30(4). 1896–1935. • Migdalski, K. 2006. *The syntax of compound tenses in Slavic*. Utrecht: LOT. • Pisarkowa, K. 1984. *Historia składni języka polskiego*. Wrocław: Ossolineum. • Roberts, I. 2019. *Parameter hierarchies and Universal Grammar*. Oxford: OUP. • Ruda, M. 2024. On impersonals in Kashubian, Polish, and Silesian. *Journal of Slavic Linguistics* 32. 1–20. • Tsedryk, E. 2022. Null subjects and their overt counterparts in East Slavic root clauses. In *Null subjects in Slavic and Finno-Ugric*, 35–74. Boston/Berlin: De Gruyter.

Word count: 465