NULL ARGUMENTS IN KUMYK ADVERBIAL CLAUSES

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Situated in the context of broader corpus-based research on referring expressions, this study is concerned with conditions constraining the distribution of null subjects in non-finite clauses in Kumyk, a Turkic language of southern Russia. Null subjects occur in a number of distinct types of non-finite clauses in Kumyk, including complement clauses, participial relative clauses, and adverbial clauses. Unlike verbs of finite clauses, which exhibit agreement in person and number, verb forms in non-finite clauses exhibit no subject agreement and, thus, do not constrain reference assignment. The degree to which the referent of a null subject is syntactically restricted corresponds to the type of embedded clause, as different types of juncture between the embedded and main clause exhibit different restrictions on the interpretation of null arguments [1, p. 195]. For example, while reference assignment for a null argument of a participial relative clause is restricted to the argument it shares with the matrix clause, as in (1), null subjects of adverbial clauses are not restricted to coreferentiality with the matrix subject, as shown in (2), where the null subject of *‘turg’anda* is not coreferent with the subject of the matrix verb, *‘elteler’*. According to Haspelmath 1995, cases such as (2), constitute an “interesting minority,” within the typology of non-finite clause arguments, and their referents are assumed to be characterized by a high degree of salience [2, p. 32].

Assuming that null subjects of adverbial clauses are instances of pragmatic control by a salient referent, this study discusses these referents in terms of salience parameters suggested by Gundel et al. 1993, Walker et al. 1998, and Gruning and Kibrik 2002. Within these parameters, referents of null subjects are shown to represent the cognitive status In Focus, the most restricted status of Gundel et al.’s Givenness Hierarchy [3, p. 279], but do not necessarily represent the backward-looking center of Centering Theory as described by Walker et al. [4, p. 3].

A significant contribution from this study is evidence of the role played by Gruning and Kibrik’s parameter of protagonisthood, which addresses the role of the referent in the larger discourse [5, p. 178]. Corpus evidence suggests that null subjects of non-finite clauses which are not coreferent with the matrix subject occur only in reference to a major participant of a discourse and primarily in contexts which represent the narrative point of view of that participant. A secondary finding is the fact that such non-coreferential null subjects are only documented in clauses which represent temporal modifiers or sequential actions, suggesting that open reference is characteristic only of clauses at the lower end of Foley and Van Valin’s Interclausal Semantic Relation Hierarchy [1, p. 269. 302].

- (1) *Ari* - *gi* *u’j* - *de* *t_i* *ash* *et* – *egen* *k’atyn* – *y_i*
 further - MOD home - LOC food do - PR.PRT wife - 3.POSS
bir *kharbuz* *al* - *yp* *gel* - *e*.
 one watermelon take - GER come - PR
 ‘The wife, who was making food in the back room, brings one watermelon.’

- (2) *Pajkhammar_i* *da* *namazyn* *k"yl yp*,
 Prophet EMPH prayer.ACC do.GER

$\emptyset_i$ yurekin de parakhat etip jata.
 heart.3.POSS EMPH peace do.GER lies.down.3PR
 Erten $\emptyset_i$ turg"anda tilegenler_j gelip $\emptyset_j$ k"yzni elteler.
 Morning rise.PST.PRT.LOC ones.who.ask come.GER girl.ACC lead.away.PR.PL
 'The prophet prays, makes his heart peaceful, and lies down. When (he_i) had gotten up
 in the morning, those asking for the marriage come and lead the girl away.'

Abbreviations: 3 = 3rd person, ACC = accusative, EMPH = emphasis, GER = gerund, LOC = locative, MOD = modifier, PL = plural, PR = present tense, POSS = possessive, PRT = participle, PST = past.

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